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ABSTRACT

This secondary school curriculum guide contains three sections of instructional materials about three areas of African American life. The section "Community Life" includes detailed lessons on family, the church, education, business, and organizations. The section "Public Life" provides in-depth lessons on media, science and medicine, armed forces, the judiciary, civil rights, and sports. The section "The Arts" presents lessons on visual arts, music, literature, theatre, and film. Each lesson has stated objectives, list of key terms, an overview, activities, and a bibliography. The appendix includes a glossary of terms. (LBG)

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# FROM VICTORY TO FREEDOM

## The African American Experience

Secondary Curriculum

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National Afro American Museum and Cultural Center

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# FROM VICTORY TO FREEDOM

## The African American Experience

Curriculum Guide

Secondary School Course of Study

National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center
Wilberforce, Ohio

*A project of the Ohio Historical Society*

Cover illustration and internal illustrations are by Ervin Henderson.

The cover illustration superimposes a contemporary American student upon two elements of traditional African art, a terracotta head and a strip of Kente cloth. The head is a fragment of a sculpture made in the Early Pavement Period at Ife by the Yoruba people, who presently inhabit Nigeria and the People's Republic of Benin in West Africa. Kente cloth is an African handwoven textile made in narrow lengths on small looms. For centuries, Kente cloth has been an art of the Ashante people of Ghana and the Ewe of Ghana and Togo. Each type of Kente cloth has its own name, and many of the design patterns are abstract representations of proverbs. Richness and complexity of Kente cloth historically indicated rank and wealth of the owner. Certain types of the cloth were also associated with particular rituals—weddings, mourning, or birth. Kente cloth thus embodies not only African artistry but also a whole realm of social and cultural meaning. In America, Kente cloth has been used in strip quilts, a favorite form of expression for Black quiltmakers during the antebellum period and later, through the present.

This curriculum was funded in part through grants from the Junior League of Columbus, Ohio, and the RJR Nabisco Foundation

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# Foreword

The original goal for the development of a National Afro-American Museum was to present the contributions Black people made to the development of the American Republic. The museum's exhibits were to balance the negative reports on urban unrest in the nation's cities. The rise in the number of Afro-American museums during the Black Revolution of the 1960s paralleled the growth in Black studies programs. Both movements were attempts to compensate for the failure of the American education system to provide for the inclusion of the role of Black people in American history and culture.

A project of the Ohio Historical Society, the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center opened its doors in 1988. The opening of this Wilberforce facility signaled a heightened commitment to the interpretation and presentation of the Afro-American legacy and a greater opportunity to understand the contradictions, dreams, and opportunities in American society. The National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center chronicles and illustrates, through artifacts, documents, contemporary design techniques, films, and other media, the rich and varied aspects of the Afro-American experience.

The history of America is incomplete without an examination of today's Afro-American experience, the legacy of the thirty million Americans of African descent. From African villages and city-states to present-day roles in contemporary American society, this experience covers centuries of struggle and achievement, repression and resolve. It is a story of many parts, which together form a tapestry that elicits appreciation and understanding.

However, after the passing of two decades, significant changes in the way African American history and culture are interpreted have not occurred in our nation's school systems. As we move forward through the twenty-first century, the nation will undergo dramatic demographic changes. Rather than the perpetuation of the neglect of African Americans, there is a new call for a multicultural society with new emphasis on cultural diversity. Elementary and secondary education will have to be restructured to be more responsive to the needs of nonwhites.

While many school officials across the country are beginning to realize the need to be responsive to the concerns of all their students, they have been slow to incorporate the struggles and contributions of nonwhites. Our initial review of educational literature revealed a scarcity of resources readily available for incorporation into history, social studies, and other curricula.

*From Victory to Freedom* offers a unique opportunity for school teachers to incorporate multicultural education into their school curricula. Developed not to replace, but to expand, what is currently taught in school, the curriculum is designed to be part of subject areas already taught. Just as the Museum's exhibition "From Victory to Freedom: Afro-American Life in the Fifties" must be viewed within the context of American society, Afro-American history is American history and must be seen as part and parcel of the larger picture. Useful across many disciplines, the curriculum allows for Black history to be taught year-round and used by all students and teachers, regardless of teaching styles or classroom situations.

This project was conceived to provide educational support materials for teachers and students visiting the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center's first permanent exhibition. It soon became evident that a narrowly based curriculum could not provide the support materials needed to explore adequately the themes in "From Victory to Freedom: Afro-American Life in the Fifties." Because of the concern, moreover, for students outside the geographic region of the Museum, this curriculum has been designed to function effectively as a stand-alone resource.

The project was funded by the Junior League of Columbus. We are pleased to acknowledge the encouragement of Mrs. Heather Ness, then chapter president. Once funded, the project was chaired by Ms. Beverly Flowers. Dr. Beverly M. Gordon, College of Education, The Ohio State University, was hired to do the research and writing. We are appreciative of the long hours donated by the Curriculum Advisory Committee, which reviewed numerous drafts of the documents. We thank Edna Harper and Floyd Thomas, staff members of the National Afro-American Museum, for checking the facts and suggesting areas for revisions. Special thanks to Dr. Barbara S. Glass who edited the final document and served as publication coordinator. I extend thanks to Juanita Moore, who served as project director for the several years it took to complete the curriculum. The publication of the curriculum was made possible through the generous support of the RJR Nabisco Foundation.

The National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center hopes that this curriculum will serve to move the nation just a little further toward a truly multicultural society.

John E. Fleming, Ph.D.
Director
National Afro-American Museum
Wilberforce, Ohio

# Introduction

The twentieth century philosopher Santayana tells us that, if we do not learn the lessons of history, we are condemned to repeat them. If Santayana is correct, then the study of African American history is especially important as all groups learn to live together in harmony in American society, valuing and benefitting from each other's gifts. We believe that your students' study of African American life will be an experience of growing, exploring, gaining insights, and sharing feelings of both grief and joy. This study is especially appropriate in an educational setting, where students are accustomed to find knowledge and understanding that will equip them for adult life and participation in American democracy.

Sekou Toure, the first president of Guinea, defined culture in a clear way. For Toure, culture is the sum total of material, ideological, and spiritual values created by people throughout their history. Culture encompasses "all the material and immaterial works of art and science, plus knowledge, manners, education, a mode of thought, behavior and attitudes accumulated by the people . . ." (Sekou Toure, "A Dialectical Approach to Culture," *The Black Scholar*, 1 (1), 12). Every group of people must understand their culture to see themselves better in the context of the world around them.

American educational institutions, particularly from the elementary through the secondary levels, play a vital role in passing cultural knowledge from generation to generation. In this context, it is important that students learn not only about the dominant American culture, but also about the Black experience, which has enriched and changed the course of American history. One of the purposes of this curriculum is to provide a supplement to textbooks, to assure students opportunities to learn about Black culture and Black experience.

The Black experience in America is the history of a people stolen from their African homelands to be enslaved, a people who through compelling struggle and courage overcame physical, psychological, social, and cultural oppression. The culture forged from this experience contains struggle, sacrifice, determination, hope, and triumph.

Too many African American young people today do not have a shared understanding of Black culture and Black history. These young people may have difficulty seeing a relationship between themselves and the historical struggles and contemporary issues which surround the African American community. Realizing their connectedness with these issues is equally important for other young people. This document attempts to illuminate both groups' perspective with an appropriate interpretation of African American cultural roots, with the goals of improved relationships and responsible citizenship in the future.

The National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center, sponsor of these materials, is a cultural institution which recreates and revitalizes African American history. The museum's inaugural exhibition, "From Victory to Freedom: Afro-American Life in the Fifties," provides a perspective of life from within the African American community seldom found in other historical sources. The exhibition and this accompanying document represent only a small portion of African American life and culture, suggesting and preparing students for a larger study of Black history.

This secondary curriculum presents sixteen different aspects of African American life with a special emphasis on the Fifties era, the cultural period between 1945 and 1965 that the museum's exhibition explores. This curriculum is designed to complement the museum exhibition and to provide useful historical facts and analysis. It can also enhance the relationship between reading, critical thinking, and a student's interest in actual participation in social, cultural, and political issues. We believe that your presentation of its content and your students' participation in its activities will enrich learning in your classroom.

## Using the Curriculum

The following course of study is designed to assist secondary school teachers, students, and other interested persons in achieving a deeper understanding of some of the dimensions of African American life and culture during the Fifties era, 1945-1965. Neither the historical overviews nor the class activities are all-inclusive, but they will illuminate the social and political struggles of Blacks in the past and the challenges for Blacks in the future. Your students, after working through this curriculum, will better understand the current and future dynamics of the Black experience in America.

This curriculum may be challenging for your students. It is intended to engage students in new avenues of thought and new kinds of activities. It will be especially effective in the socially interactive classroom, for it encourages discussion, group work, library work, and thoughtful exploration of the community. Teachers and students should work together to plan information gathering, classroom work, and creative products.

Presented here are sixteen dimensions of the Black experience in America: Family, Church, Education, Business, Organizations, Media, Science and Medicine, Armed Forces, Judiciary, Civil Rights, Sports, Visual Arts, Music, Literature, Theatre, and Film. Each unit can stand alone as a class learning experience, and each contains three general sections.

In the first section are objectives, terms, and overview. The overview's content is historical information about the topic under study, so as to provide background for the activities that follow.

The second section provides activities which reinforce students' learning. Here you will find a range of individual, small group, and classroom projects designed for a variety of skill levels and time schedules. There are games, dramatic activities, primary historical investigation, and research projects. Some of the activities will require more commitment of time and effort than others. You and your students may want to generate a priority list for the activities, picking and choosing those which seem most appropriate for your needs. Students should also be encouraged to extend, modify, or go beyond the suggestions here, creating their own activities to support their own objectives. You will want to guide students in directions which best help them understand the lived experiences of real people in real situations.

The third section is the bibliography which lists various library, journal, magazine, record album, and audiovisual resources. The bibliography should not be viewed as a comprehensive list, but as an example of the materials that are available from a variety of sources.

This curriculum has been designed to support use and reuse. Its abundance of activities and resources provides for many kinds and directions of learning. We hope it will help fulfill your needs and your students' needs for several years to come.

# COMMUNITY LIFE

# Family

**Objectives**

to identify the strengths of the African American family
to explore the role of family in shaping and supporting individuals
to list the problems and obstacles overcome by African American families since slavery

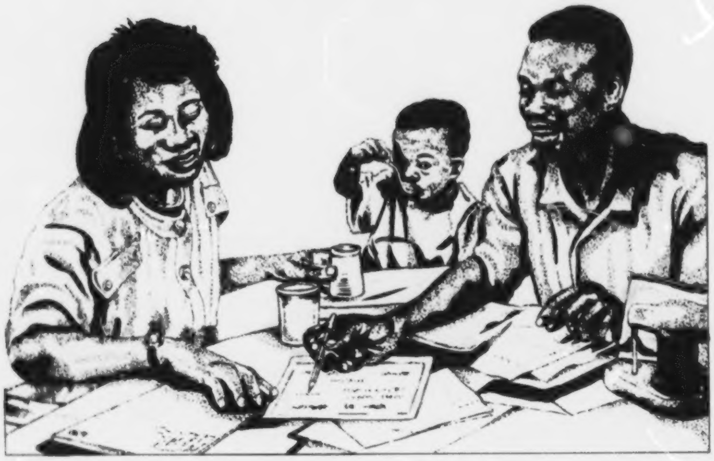
**Terms**

social scientist
nuclear family
pathology
extended family
matriarchy
augmented family

**Overview**

A close-knit family structure was basic to ancient African societies. Often in African tribal societies, the family was an extended family, including many individuals, some of whom were not blood relatives. In some cases, the entire tribe was regarded as kin. This concept of the larger family is part of the African American tradition. Hardly any Black person alive today over sixty years of age can remember growing up in a family without close relationships among aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, grandmothers, grandfathers, and cousins both near and far.

It is clear that slavery made the formation of Black families more difficult, and frequently denied a role for the Black man as a husband and father. However, even under the slave system, strong and extended Black families formed the basic survival strategy for Black people. Slave narratives and other accounts from these times underscore the intense determination of slave families to be kept together. In one account, Israel, a crippled Black man, was put up for auction. Facing the danger of being separated from wife and children, he declared his willingness to work himself to death for any master who would buy his wife Martha Ann and his children with him. The account continues:



> As her husband's voice broke on her ear, Martha Ann, who had been looking sadly out of the window in a pose of quiet dignity, turned her face with an expression of exquisite love and gratitude toward Israel. She gazed for a moment at her husband and at her children, and then looked away once more, her eyes brimming with tears. (quoted by Eugene D. Genovese, "The Myth of the Absent Family" in Robert Staples, *The Black Family: Essays and Studies*, Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1978.)

Caring masters tried to keep slave families together. Unfeeling masters added separation of families to the other indignities and sorrows they forced on Blacks.

After slavery, as some writers have pointed out, Black families were about as often to be found in nuclear patterns as families in other racial or ethnic groups. Moreover, as many writers have shown, the Black family, which consistently resisted even the enforced separations of slavery, later formed itself in a variety of ways to adapt to the social and economic conditions threatening it. Consequently, Black families without the leadership of a husband/father figure found other kinds of financial and emotional support and other figures to give the role model guidance he represented. This positive view of the Black family seemed correct at the end of the Fifties era. As Andrew Billingsley stated in 1968, "The Black family has proved to be an amazingly resilient institution." (See Andrew Billingsley, *Black Families in White America*, Anniversary edition, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988.)

Billingsley further categorized the three major types of African American families he saw as functioning in America. A nuclear family, he said, includes a husband, wife, and children. An extended family is a nuclear family which has another relative or other relatives living with it. An augmented family is a nuclear or extended family which has unrelated people living with it.

Not all writers drew the same conclusions as Billingsley about the resiliency of the Black family. After the 1940s, a number of social scientists concluded that something was wrong with the Black American family. By 1965, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, for example, had written that weaknesses in the Black family structure, chiefly its frequent dependence on the mother as leader and provider, resulted in a "tangle of pathology." These "weaknesses," Moynihan concluded, accounted for many of the problems Black Americans suffered in American society. (See Moynihan's argument in Robert Staples' *The Black Family: Essays and Studies*, Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1978.)

After Moynihan's report, many social scientists studied, tested, and disagreed with his theories. Wade Nobles, for example, pointed out that the Black family unit, sometimes including members who were not blood kin, was a heritage of African tradition and not evidence of a failing. Others noted that the heavy socioeconomic burdens on the Black family, as well as the higher mortality rate among Black males in urban areas, were the causes of matrilocal families. Thus Black family units that were not nuclear families were not nontraditional, nor did they lack cohesiveness. Still others suggested that the major differences between the Black family and the stereotypical White middle class family had to do with the number of grandparents, other relatives, and boarders living in Black households. The extended and augmented families were simply a much greater part of the Black experience than the White.

Moreover, it has been shown that in the Fifties era the Black family provided a strong support system. Since their arrival in America, Black families had provided for their orphans, widows, and poor without government assistance. Wealth or opportunity tended to be shared and multiplied as educated individuals helped other family members through school and the employed helped unemployed relatives get jobs. Throughout the Fifties, this pattern continued. The Black family was a vital institution which reinforced Black strength and Black demands for equality.

It should be said in Moynihan's defense, however, that he was able to glimpse the future. The pathology he described so powerfully was to materialize more clearly later, partly as a result of the apparent gains Blacks made in the Fifties era. The first fact to be noted is that the Black family became more and more nuclear as migration to the North and to urban areas separated children from grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Single parents and heads of households became more and more alone in their struggle to help their families survive. As a traditional support system, the Black family was eroding.

Ironically, integration itself dealt further heavy blows. Integrated education, for example, a cherished goal of Blacks, became a two-edged sword. As Black children began attending White schools, the caring guidance of the Black teacher in the Black school was lost. For a century, these teachers had endured every kind of privation to give the Black child a better chance for the future. With a sense of mission, they taught values and manners and imbued students with ideals and dreams. Moreover, as Black children gained entrance to White schools and left Black teachers behind, values education in public schools in general was disintegrating. Values education became more and more the responsibility of the family at a time when the Black family was weakening.

As integration affected neighborhoods, the more affluent Blacks, who had always lived in close proximity to the less affluent Blacks, could afford to move to White suburbs. Valuable role models for inner-city Black youth were thus disappearing. Black neighborhoods began to transform into Black ghettos.

The results of all these developments for Black families in the present have been devastating. During the Fifties era, Blacks worked and fought for the integration they identified with equality and with betterment for their children. It is only in the decades since the Fifties era that we recognize that something was lost as well as won.

## Activities

1. Lead a student discussion to identify the major functions of the family. Encourage students to think carefully about the needs a family fulfills. These may include emotional support, a home, financial support, values education, acceptance and belonging, warmth and affection, sharing and social interaction, protection and guidance, and many others. List any student answers on the chalkboard and use them to develop a definition of a family. Point out that many kinds of groups meet the criteria students have developed for the family. Ask students if other groups in their lives meet any of their needs, in addition to the family.
2. Remind students that being a part of a family requires mutual respect and concern. Ask students to identify and list the functions they fulfill within their families, and the interpersonal needs that they meet for the members of their families.
3. Have students read examples of slave narratives from the list below or from other books available in your local library. In reporting on their reading, students should describe the attitude toward family and the realities of family life under conditions of slavery. Ask students to speculate about the lasting consequences of such brutal and inhumane treatment on the men, women, and children affected.

   The following list of slave narratives may be helpful.

   Bibb, Henry. *The Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, an American Slave, Written by Himself, with an Introduction by Lucius Matlock.* New York, 1849.

   Clarke, Lewis. *Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis and Milton Clarke, Sons of a Soldier of the Revolution.* Boston, 1846.

   Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave.* Garden City, New York: Dolphin Books, 1963. (Also available in other paperback editions.)

   Frazier, E. Franklin. "Motherhood in Bondage," from *The Negro Family in the United States*, 2nd revised and abridged edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966.

   Grandy, Moses. *Narrative of the Life of Moses Grandy; Late a Slave in the United States of America.* Boston, 1844.

   *Lay My Burden Down: A Folk History of Slavery.* B.A. Botkin, ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945.

   *The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada, as Narrated by Himself.* Boston, 1844.

   Steward, Austin. *Twenty-Two Years a Slave, and Forty Years a Freeman.* Rochester, 1857.
4. Help students understand that there are many different ways to be a family and that families come together in many different ways. (Because the subject of family may be sensitive for students who are in foster or blended families, allow the discussion to be completely voluntary. Some students may prefer simply to listen to what their peers are saying about this issue.) Define nuclear, augmented, and extended families as they appear in the overview. If any students are living in an augmented or extended family, they may be willing to discuss how that arrangement has worked for them. Some students who are part of a blended family may feel comfortable discussing what happens when two separate families begin to live together.

## Family

**Worksheet Activity** Match the words and definitions on this page by placing the correct number of the definition in the blank next to the word.

nuclear family ____________________
extended family ____________________
augmented family ____________________
matriarchy ____________________
slave narrative ____________________

role model ____________________
patriarchy ____________________
kinship ____________________
social scientist ____________________
pathology ____________________

1. The conditions and effects of a disease
2. A power structure made up of men
3. Relationship, especially by blood
4. One who can be an example to others; one who is a success in a particular endeavor
5. One who studies group behavior, including families, nations, institutions, and how they fit into the overall society
6. A written account of life as a slave by a former slave
7. A combination of wife, husband, and children under one roof
8. A parent or parents, their offspring, and other related individuals such as grandmothers, aunts, or cousins
9. A family group living with unrelated individuals
10. A power structure made up of women

## Bibliography

Barnes, Annie B. *The Black Middle Class Family: A Study of Black Subsociety, Neighborhood, and Home in Interaction.* Bristol, Indiana: Wyndham Hall Press, 1985.

Billingsley, Andrew. *Black Families in White America*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988.

Billingsley, Andrew, and Jeanne Giovannoni. *Children of the Storm.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972.

"The Black Child." *Ebony* (August, 1974).

Frazier, E. Franklin. *The Negro Family in the United States.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966.

Gutman, Robert George. *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1976.

Higgins, Chester, Jr., and Orde Combs. *Some Time Ago: A Historic Portrait of Black Americans from 1850-1950.* Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1980.

Hill, Robert B. *The Strengths of Black Families.* New York: Emerson Hall, 1972.

Johnson, Michael P. *Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South.* New York: Norton, 1984.

Jones, Jacqueline. *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present.* New York: Basic Books, 1985.

Martin, Elmer, and Joanne Martin. *The Black Extended Family.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Moynihan, Daniel Patrick. *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action.* Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Labor, Office of Policy Planning and Research, 1965. See also Staples, Robert, ed., *The Black Family: Essays and Studies.* Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1978.

Scanzoni, John H. *The Black Family in Modern Society.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977.

Staples, Robert, ed. *The Black Family: Essays and Studies.* Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1978.

Woodward, C. Vann. *The Strange Career of Jim Crow.* New York: Oxford Galaxy, 1966.

Wyden, Barbara, and Phyllis Harrison-Ross, M.D. *The Black Child: A Parent's Guide.* New York: Peter Wyden, Inc., 1973.

# The Church

**Objectives**

to list major Black religious leaders and church organizations
to explore ways in which Black churches have supported African Americans
to identify ways in which churches, both Black and White, have been directly influential or supportive

**Terms**

Black Power
boycott
civil disobedience

**Overview**

The Black church has always been a source of identity, values, and dignity for Blacks in the United States. It has also provided leadership and served as a social center for Black communities. Its supportive role arose from the fact that it was the first institution/organization to be owned and completely controlled by African Americans. Blacks who had been denied positions of leadership in political and social organizations found opportunities for social responsibility through the church. Historically, the Black church has been a source of educated, caring Black leaders.

While Blacks in general had been regarded as second class citizens by White society, Christian Blacks had refused to tolerate this attitude in their place of worship. As long ago as 1787, when White officials pulled Richard Allen and Absalom Jones from their knees because they were praying in the White section of St. George's Episcopal Church, Blacks knew they needed their own churches. Allen and Jones withdrew from St. George's, each later forming his own church. Ultimately, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, which Richard Allen was instrumental in uniting, became a major Black denomination. Other Black churches were often separate divisions of White denominations, such as the Baptists and Methodists.

The spirituals, sermons, and worship practices of Black churches helped provide a "rock in the storm" during the last brutal years of the slave system. Sometimes in the open, sometimes in secret, these churches helped give Black people hope that freedom would someday come. Even before emancipation, some Black churches were providing educational opportunities that were denied to Blacks by most educational institutions. In 1863, for example, A.M.E. Bishop Daniel A. Payne was instrumental in the purchase of Wilberforce University from White Methodists. Churches of this period were the educational, social, and civic nucleus of Black life.

Throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth, the Black church continued to be a strong support system, filling social and spiritual needs and providing caring leadership. After World War I, thousands of Black people left the rural South, and after World War II, that number became millions. In their migration, Black people took their religion with them, especially the Pentecostal and Holiness churches that had dotted the rural landscape. In the transition from rural to urban, Black churches played a particularly important role, easing the process both materially and spiritually and providing a safe haven for their members. The gospel music we know today emerged in these important and independent Black institutions.

As the "direct action" part of the Civil Rights Movement developed, many younger ministers in the independent churches became active supporters. It was no accident that the leadership of the movement came out of Baptist churches, for politically they were the most flexible.

Black Christian experience during the Fifties era was extremely diverse. Blacks belonged to sedate White sects such as the Catholics, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians. Blacks also belonged to equally sedate Afrocentric Christian denominations such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the three Baptist conventions. Finally, there were ecstatic Pentecostal and Holiness sects, in both rural and urban settings.

The churches were able to participate actively in the civil rights movement partly to the extent of their commitment to the movement and partly to the extent of their independence from a larger church organization. In many Baptist churches, the minister was responsible only to his congregation rather than a hierarchy of bishops. Hence the Baptists rather than the Catholics tended to provide political leadership.

Black ministers came forward in the fight for freedom. In 1955, when Rosa Parks was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, for refusing to give up her seat on a public bus to a White man, it was the Black ministers of the city who led the public protest. Rev. Ralph Abernathy, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rev. E. N. French helped organize the bus boycott that lasted 382 days and led to the court decision declaring segregation on buses unconstitutional.

Following the Montgomery bus boycott, in January, 1957, sixty Black leaders met to form the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Most of the leaders were ministers. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was elected its president when it met at the Atlanta Ebenezer Baptist Church. Dr. King became increasingly convinced that the gospel of Christ was best applied to social injustice through nonviolent protest. With this philosophy, Blacks engaged in civil disobedience, breaking laws which they believed to be unjust. Their commitment to civil disobedience included a willingness to accept legal penalties. Thus the Christian belief in nonviolence and love became the foundation of the protest movement of the Fifties.

Other Black religious groups which arose later approached the protest movement differently. Some of them adopted the philosophy of Black Power, an expression of Black pride and humanism which sought two objectives: to gain Black control to abolish or mitigate the effects of White racism, and to transform the Black value system so that Blacks would not assist Whites in their victimization of other Blacks.

One of the new Black religions was the Nation of Islam, which began in Detroit in the 1930s. Converts rejected Christianity because it failed to provide help or hope for Blacks. Christianity was seen as the White man's religion. Social historian, minister, and author C. Eric Lincoln said that the Nation of Islam was a response to extreme alienation, social and religious, and that its members were unique in their willingness to go to extremes in order to escape the problems of Black experience in America.

Some of the concepts of the Nation included the belief that the Black man is the original man and that the Caucasian race was created out of the weak of the Black race. God is seen as Black and the White man as a devil. The early thrust of the Nation was for the restoration of Blacks to world power. The Nation therefore allowed no White members. However, after the murder of Malcolm X in 1965 and the passage of time, the Nation softened its pronounced radical, segregational stance.

The Black social revolution which began in the mid-1950s leaned heavily on the support of the Black church and its leaders, the foremost of those being Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. As a proponent of nonviolent demonstrations, King led many marches, the most notable being the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in August, 1963, during which he made his famous "I have a dream" speech. Dr. King's peaceful and Christian approach may have averted Black-initiated violence; it also gained White support for the Black protest movement.

Other leaders in the Black church included the following:

**Howard Thurman** who on April 6, 1953, was named by *Life* magazine as one of the twelve great preachers of the twentieth century. He was Dean of Marshal Chapel at Boston University from 1953 through 1964 and was a member of the National Council of Religion in Higher Education.

**Rev. Charles Shelby Rooks**, a minister, educator, and president of Chicago Theological Seminary. He encouraged Blacks to acquire theological educations and also helped to launch the Black Doctoral Program in Religion under the auspices of the Rockefeller Fellowship Program.

**Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.** who received his master's degree in religious education from Teacher's College of Columbia University. He was elected to Congress in 1944. He remained in Congress for more than twenty years.

**C. Eric Lincoln**, minister and social historian, who is known as one of the foremost sociologists of Black religion. As a social historian, he provided analysis of Black America in the 1960s and has continued through the present. In his writing, he lists three major characteristics of Black religion: there is a distinctive feature of sharing; there is a view of God as a fighter and deliverer; and there is a recognition of the value and work of Blacks.

**Albert B. Cleage, Jr.**, a Black Christian Nationalist who in the 1960s expressed a new Black theology, identifying Christ as a Black Messiah and emphasizing the importance of a Black Nation and Black counterinstitutions as part of a communal, fulfilling way of life on earth for Blacks. He wrote *The Black Messiah* in 1968.

**Elijah (Poole) Muhammad** and **Malcolm (Little) X**, both of whom were members of the Nation of Islam. Elijah Muhammad was the first Chief Minister of Islam and eventually became the leader of the Nation in 1934. Malcolm X was converted to this religion in 1947 in a maximum security prison. Through his work for and devotion to the Nation and its community, he became second in charge under Elijah Muhammad. The "X" in his name symbolized his true African name which American society had denied him and replaced with a "slave" name. After his trip to Mecca and his disillusionment and break with Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X was murdered in 1965, allegedly by rival Muslim factions, although governmental involvement has long been suspected.

The Black church sustained Blacks when few other institutions in American society offered help. The church provided religious meaning, social refreshment, political leadership, and educational help to Blacks through their long history of oppression in America. It played a key role in the Black protest movement of the Fifties era, giving Blacks leadership as well as heroes and martyrs. Moreover, its philosophies may have averted more violent solutions to the alienation that existed between Blacks and Whites.

## Activities

1. In many communities the church and its ministers occupy an important position. Encourage students to visit a neighborhood Black or integrated church during a Sunday service. Have students report to the class on their experiences. Ask them to address specifically the theme of the sermon, the preaching style of the minister, the music, the enthusiasm and fellowship of the congregation, and any other observations they may have. Students may also interview the minister and report to the class about the church's work and involvement with community activities and social services. Specifically, ask students whether the church is addressing problems that are unsolved by other community agencies (such as homelessness, daycare, etc.).

2. Ask students to explore the idea of creating God in one's own image. While the standard American picture of God is that of a White male, obviously many other cultures at other times in history have had different pictures of God. Ask students to picture God as something other than a White male. How important might it be for Blacks to picture God as Black? Can students picture God as a woman? as Hispanic? as Chinese or Japanese? What feelings are aroused in students as they consider all of these images? Ask students to consider why the prevailing picture of God in America is that of a White male. How would students feel about attending a church in which God is pictured as a race, nationality, or sex different from their own?

3. Christianity and the Nation of Islam represent two of the major branches of Black religious philosophy in the United States. While the history and doctrines of Christianity are generally well known within America, those of Islam are not. Assign groups of students to find the following information about the Islamic religion.

   a. Muhammad was the founder of Islam. Assign one group of students to research his life and ideas.

   b. The religion founded by Muhammad spread throughout the Middle East, Africa, and to parts of Europe. Assign one group to find a map detailing the spread of the Muslim religion to various parts of the world. During its peak, how much of the world did the Islamic religion cover?

   c. Have one group create a timeline noting major events in the Islamic religion from the birth of Muhammad to the present.

   d. Assign students to research the current state of the Islamic religion. In what countries is Islam the major religion? In what countries are Muslims a significant minority? Students should provide a map indicating Muslim countries of today.

   e. Ask one group to provide comparisons between the ideals and philosophy of Christianity and those of Islam.

**Worksheet Activity**

Answer the following questions by filling in the blanks.

1. What church was formed by Richard Allen? ____________________

2. Why was it necessary for him to form his own church? ____________________

3. What role did the Black ministers of Montgomery, Alabama, play in the civil rights movement in 1955-6? ____________________

4. In January, 1957, what important civil rights group grew out of the Montgomery bus boycott? ____________________

5. What were the two objectives of the Black Power movement? ____________________ and ____________________

6. When did the Nation of Islam begin? ____________________

7. In what American city was it founded? ____________________

8. Name two leaders of the Nation of Islam. ____________________ and ____________________

9. What was the central theme and focus of Dr. Martin Luther King's philosophy? ____________________

10. Who wrote the book *The Black Messiah* in 1968? ____________________

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# Education

**Objectives** to identify Black educators and Black colleges

to compare the impact on social custom and personal lives of two court cases: *Plessy v. Ferguson* and *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*

to list organizations and individuals who were or are leaders in making educational opportunities available to all Blacks

**Terms** separate but equal

**Overview**

Since the 1700s, education has been perceived by Blacks as a necessary tool with which to build better lives in America. Equality of educational opportunity, however, was denied Blacks for most of their history in this country. Slaves were usually not permitted to learn to read and write. After emancipation, having been denied opportunities for an education for so long, the freedmen throughout the South helped organize free public education systems for all. Even though Blacks hoped that educational opportunities would help erase the inequities of their condition, obstacles to educational opportunity mounted. The *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court case of 1896 resulted in a ruling that Blacks could be barred from White schools, coaches, theatres, and restaurants, if they were granted "separate but equal" accommodations.

As Blacks discovered through the years, the schools that were separate were hardly ever equal. The schools established for African Americans received less money per pupil than the schools for Whites, were often located further distances away, and were often in a state of disrepair. Textbooks, equipment, and furnishings were antiquated, shabby, or substandard. Yet education, even in this dismal light, was a serious matter to most Blacks. John Griffin commented:

> The Negro knows one thing. The only way out of this tragedy is through education and training. Education for the Negro is serious business. They are so close to the days when their ancestors were kept totally illiterate, when their ancestors learned to read and write at the risk of severe punishment, that learning is almost a sacred privilege now. . . . Thousands of Negroes sacrifice everything to get their education, to prove once and for all that the Negro's capacity for learning, for accomplishment is equal to that of any other man—that the pigment has nothing to do with degrees of intelligence, talent or virtue. This isn't just wishful thinking. It's been proven in every field. (John H. Griffin, *Black Like Me,* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961.)

The financial burden of maintaining two school systems was so great that generally low standards resulted for both races. Discrimination, poverty, and the lack of professional opportunities for even well educated Blacks discouraged those who sought learning.

Yet courageous leaders and teachers emerged to insist on education for Black children and youth. Many Black teachers who endured substandard, poorly heated classrooms and who taught without decent books or equipment nevertheless were able to educate their students and even instill in them a love for learning. Black college educators, through enormous efforts and sacrifices, founded colleges for Black youth. Among these educators were Mary McLeod Bethune and Booker T. Washington. Black colleges that were established during the second half of the nineteenth century included Wilberforce, Clark, Virginia Union, Atlanta University, Hampton Institute, and Spelman. All these educators served as role models and inspired their students to excel in spite of discrimination.

During most of the nation's history, evidence of racism was present throughout the American educational system. But during the 1940s, individuals such as Walter White and Mordecai Johnson were spearheading efforts to make equal educational opportunities available to all Blacks. There were also other important events. The first issue of *Negro Digest* was published by John H. Johnson in 1942. The Congress of Racial Equality was established in 1942. The United Negro College Fund was incorporated in 1944, and it is yet striving to ensure the continued success of Black colleges and universities. Texas Southern University was established in 1947. All these events furthered the cause of Black education.

During this time, the NAACP led a relentless frontal attack on discrimination and segregation in education, beginning at the graduate level and culminating at the elementary and high school levels. Court cases against discrimination and segregation were being argued in many federal courts. In 1954 a landmark Supreme Court decision (*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*) was handed down by Chief Justice Earl B. Warren. Declaring the "separate but equal" systems unconstitutional, Warren wrote, "In the field of public education, the doctrine of separate but equal has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."

Two other important court decisions regarding education followed:

- May 31, 1955: The Supreme Court ruled that educational integration was to be achieved with "all deliberate speed."
- March 5, 1956: The Supreme Court ruled that the ban on segregation in public schools also applied to tax-supported colleges and universities.

The rulings were not accepted without hostility, especially in the South. In September of 1957, when Elizabeth Eckford attempted to enter previously all-White Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, she was met by a mob of angry Whites who yelled, "Lynch her! Lynch her!" The federalized national guard which should have protected Elizabeth did little to help her. In 1963, James Meredith had to be escorted by U.S. marshals as he became the first Black student to enroll in the University of Mississippi. Four years later, he was shot near Hernando, Mississippi, while on a civil rights march to Jackson.

The school year 1956-57 opened in the seventeen southern and border states with 723 school districts and school units desegregated, a gain of 186 over the previous year. However, by January, 1969, a federal survey revealed that fifteen years after the historic *Brown* decision, almost 80% of African American children were still attending all-Black schools.

**Worksheet Activity**

Answer the following questions on the lines provided.

1. What inequities were legal in American society as a result of the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision of 1896? ______________________________

______________________________

2. Explain why the doctrine of "separate but equal" was unfair. ______________

______________________________

3. Name three Black colleges established during the second half of the nineteenth century. ____________, ______________, and ______________

4. Name two Black educators who founded colleges for Black youth.

______________________ and ______________________

5. How did the landmark Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* change American society? ______________________

______________________________

6. Who is James Meredith?______________________________

7. What magazine was first published by John H. Johnson in 1942? __________

8. What is the goal of the United Negro College Fund? __________________

______________________________

9. What kinds of conditions were faced by Black students and teachers during the time of "separate but equal" schools? ______________________

______________________________

10. Who was Chief Justice of the Supreme Court when *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* was heard? ______________________

## Additional Activities

1. There were many obstacles to receiving an equal opportunity in education for Black Americans in the Fifties era. Ask students to interview Black leaders in your area who attended school prior to 1965. Find out how long they attended school, what conditions were like, what factors in their education encouraged them, and what factors discouraged them. Did anything in their education influence their leadership in the present?
2. Encourage Black and White students to think about their own education. What are some contemporary problems faced by students and schools? Have students investigate how schools are supported. How are they funded? How much money is spent per student in your school district? What other problems exist within the school in addition to money problems? Do any of those other problems keep students from getting the kind of education they want? Ask students to discuss what they think is important in their education and whether they are learning what they need to or not.
3. Each city and county has a school system with a history in segregation and integration. Have students research their own school system during the years 1945 through 1965. This can be accomplished through interviews, library research, and/or reading public records. Have students find out about the role of the school board in the integration of schools, as well as the role of community leaders. Discuss the students' findings. To complete the discussion, find out the current demographics of your district, particularly the numbers of Black and White teachers and students.
4. Have students read Mildred Taylor's Newbery Award-winning novel *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* and sequel *Let the Circle Be Unbroken*. Have each student write a report about one or both books that focuses on what students have seen or understood that was new to them.

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# Business and Industry

**Objectives**

to list ways in which Black Americans were denied economic advancement during the Fifties era
to identify three Blacks who helped break color barriers in business and industry during the era
to compare the economic conditions for Blacks during the Fifties era with conditions existing now

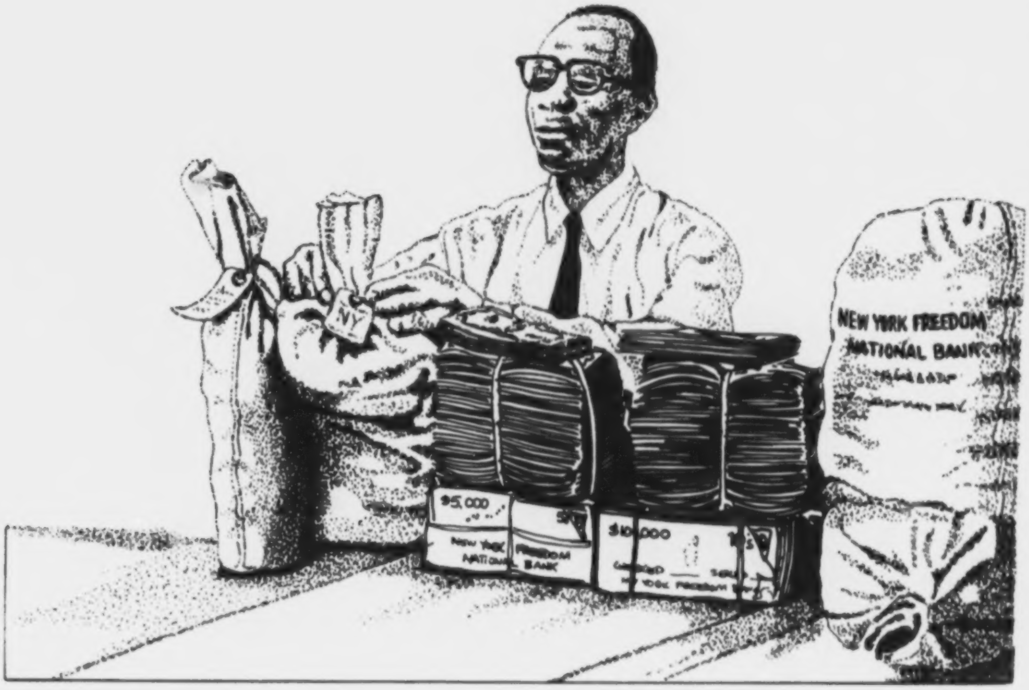
**Terms**

blue collar
white collar
tokenism
skilled labor
unskilled labor
boycott

**Overview**

Business and economic opportunities provided challenge, frustration, and a measure of success for African Americans in the Fifties era. By the beginning of the Fifties era, Blacks had set up and nurtured their own businesses in their communities. Especially in larger southern cities, Blacks owned and controlled lending institutions, insurance companies, law firms, medical and dental practices, funeral establishments, barber shops and beauty salons, lounges, clothing tailoring and cleaners shops, entertainment businesses, grocery and food services, and many others. Few of these businesses were large or nationally organized, but they served the needs of their communities.

Although there were growing numbers of qualified Black men and women to assume positions in the business world beyond their own neighborhoods, White employers were reluctant to hire them. In the blue collar labor force, however, Blacks were finding work. The Korean War, coupled with the economic expansion of the early 1950s, created a manpower shortage that led employers to look more and more to Black workers. For this reason, business could hire Blacks into the industrial labor force without fear of racist backlash from White workers. At times, a Fair Employment Practices Commission or civil rights boycott also helped persuade employers to extend equal employment opportunities to all.



While these developments gave African Americans greater access to jobs in the skilled, semiskilled, and unskilled labor force, opportunity and advancement in the corporate world were far more difficult to achieve, especially early in the Fifties era. The problems that Blacks faced in gaining corporate advancement were rooted in discriminatory attitudes of White employers. Many employers seemed to feel that there were sufficient Whites to hold management jobs, and that it would be intolerable for an African American to hold a leadership position in a company with White subordinates. Thus Blacks who managed to get hired often remained in lower level jobs while White counterparts advanced up to better jobs and pay.

As the Fifties era unfolded, however, Blacks began to make small gains. While many Blacks settled for jobs beneath their capabilities in the corporate structure, more areas of employment opened to them. Over the three-year span of the Korean War, Blacks made their greatest advances of the decade in prosperity in relation to Whites. The number of Blacks in unskilled occupations declined while the number in semiskilled, skilled, and white collar occupations climbed. The main areas of new jobs were clerical and sales. Later in the decade, this trend would slow and even seem to reverse. Still, some progress had been made.

In 1953, through Executive Order 10479, Dwight Eisenhower created the President's Committee on Government Contracts to ensure equal job opportunities for all American citizens, regardless of creed or color. This committee was chaired by Vice President Richard M. Nixon; hence the name "Nixon Committee."

The Nixon Committee was largely ineffective throughout its early years and perhaps throughout its existence. Yet as a result of minimal pressure applied by the committee to chief executive officers of some major firms, a few African Americans were given access to skilled and white collar jobs for the first time. Some of the committee's efforts were tokenism at best, empty gestures which failed to resolve complaints about real, generalized discrimination or to enforce legal obligations of government contractors. Yet a door had been opened, and a precedent had been set. Furthermore, the educational goals of the committee had been better realized. Disappointed Blacks, for the time being, had to content themselves with these gains.

Statistically, the Nixon Committee was a failure. There was not an appreciable increase in nonwhite employment over the lifespan of the committee. Yet it was important and instrumental in gaining opportunities for new positions and in forcing many firms to recognize the philosophy of equal employment. The committee did not make a vast difference in the lives of Black men and women in business, but it did pave the way for an era of improved opportunities later.

The banking industry was especially slow to accept Black workers. During the Fifties era, Blacks represented less than two percent of the financial sector's workforce. Other industry, including agriculture, employed about four times as many Blacks as did the financial community. Even by 1960, when there were over ten thousand commercial banks as well as another ten thousand savings and loan associations, there was less than one Black employee per banking establishment.

Three Blacks distinguished themselves by their achievements in business and industry during this era. Asa Philip Randolph made a tremendous impact on the Black economic condition by fighting for resolutions against racial discrimination in industrial unions. John H. Johnson became a major force in Black economic history as president of the multimillion dollar Johnson Publishing Company in Chicago. Berry Gordy, Jr. found success in the explosive record industry of the Fifties era.

Asa Philip Randolph had organized the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. In the Fifties era, he was instrumental in fighting discriminatory practices in employment. He helped establish the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) and the Negro American Labor Council (NALC). He worked hard to achieve agreements in labor and business with the AFL-CIO and the UAW. Asa Philip Randolph was one of the most economically influential men in the twentieth century, and certainly in the Fifties era.

John H. Johnson's company is most noted for publishing *Ebony* magazine. Devoted to news about Blacks around the world, this monthly periodical has continued to gain both Black and White readers. Johnson succeeded partly because he was able to persuade advertisers that Black consumers were a vast untapped market which could be reached through a periodical about and for them. Johnson had gained experience in business and finance as a young man working for the Supreme Life Insurance Company. In his first publishing venture, he mortgaged his mother's furniture to pay postage on 20,000 letters to Supreme's customers, offering a charter subscription to *Negro Digest.* Later, after making *Ebony* a success, Johnson also published *Jet* and *Tan* magazines.

During the Fifties era, a young man named Berry Gordy, Jr. began his climb to phenomenal business success. His initial efforts, however, did not look promising. He opened a record store in 1953, but the venture failed. Berry Gordy then worked on the Ford assembly line for less than $80 per week. In 1957, he quit the job to write popular songs and cut a demo tape with his friend Jackie Wilson. With small financial success (his first hit netted him $1,000), Gordy wrote or co-wrote several songs in the next two years. Unhappy with the way his songs were being recorded, he decided to produce his own music. The decision led to his creation of Motown Records. For Motown, Gordy signed and recorded some of the most musically acclaimed Black pop, rock, and soul artists of the Fifties era. Motown showcased the talents of Blacks while making Gordy a strong influence in American music.

Overall, the business and economic success of Blacks did improve somewhat in the Fifties era. The time of the greatest strides was early in the 1950s decade during the Korean War. During the second half of the decade, the relative economic growth rate of Blacks tapered off. The end result was that Blacks gained little income relative to Whites. However, significant gains were achieved in opportunities and in changes of attitudes, practices, and law. These set the stage for improved conditions later, especially for the Black middle class after the Fifties era.

## Activities

1. Help students investigate the current economic success of Blacks within your community. Have students compile a list of Black men and women who own their own businesses or are professionals in your community. The list can include people known personally to students in addition to people well-known in the community. To augment the list, students may wish to contact local chapters of Black fraternities and sororities, ministers of Black churches, and Black professional organizations.

   Assign one student or a small group of students (no more than two or three) to interview each of several of the business people from the class list. Students can begin their interview with questions from Worksheet #2, but should feel free to ask any appropriate questions that occur to them. When interviews are completed, each student or group of students should report back to the class on the results of the interview. After the reports, class discussion can focus on general conclusions about the qualities and attitudes that characterize Black business people who have achieved economic success.

2. Help students identify some of the employers in your area. Be sure to include public employers such as county and city governments (including police and fire departments), small businesses, large industries, and corporations. Ask for student volunteers to contact personnel officers at each of these places of business.

   Volunteers should identify themselves as students making a report to their class and should ask the following questions: Are any special recruitment or hiring practices followed by this employer to draw minority applicants and employees? What is the current percentage of minority employment at this place of business? Students may also ask whether the employer kept statistics concerning the percentage of minority people employed over a period of years. Employers concerned about compliance with federal law, and local government employers, are most likely to have those statistics.

   After students report their findings to the class, encourage students to discuss their reactions to the recruitment and hiring practices of the employers who responded. You may also handle this activity as a panel discussion by inviting personnel officers from each type of employer to answer questions in class.

3. Have students interview older members of the community to discover what employment opportunities were available for Blacks locally during the Fifties. Again, Black churches and the local chapter of the NAACP are good resources, in addition to those people known personally to students. Identify any Black "firsts." Find out what it was like to break the color barrier in a business or professional field.

4. Have students create a trivia game that measures knowledge of content from this unit. You may wish to allow students to take turns orally contributing questions and answers while a specially elected or chosen student writes them onto cards or slips of paper. Help students set up procedures, rules, and scoring for the game. List these on the chalkboard. Allow students to participate in several rounds of the game as a whole-class review of this unit.

**Worksheet #1** Answer the questions below.

1. Describe the kinds of businesses Blacks had established by the beginning of the Fifties era. ______________________________

2. Explain how the Korean War affected employment opportunities for Black workers. ______________________________

3. Describe the extent of Black success in corporate, white collar positions during the Fifties era. ______________________________

4. What was the stated goal of the Nixon Committee? ______________________________

5. In what ways did the committee fail? ______________________________

6. What goals did the Nixon Committee actually achieve? ______________________________

**Worksheet #1**
*continued*

7. Why was the committee important for Blacks' future economic opportunities?

______________________________

______________________________

8. Explain how A. Philip Randolph helped Blacks make economic progress.

______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

9. What products did John H. Johnson's company produce? ______________

______________________________

10. What business did Berry Gordy, Jr. establish? ______________

______________________________

## Business

**Worksheet #2**

Questions on this worksheet are guidelines to be used to help structure interview information when you report back to the class. Depending on how well you know your interview subject, you may want to spend a few minutes getting comfortable with him/her through informal conversation. You may want to say a few words about yourself and the purpose of this class project. You may ask these questions in any order, skip over any questions you do not wish to ask, and add any questions that seem appropriate to you.

1. What are your name and business? ____________________

   ________________________________________

2. In what year were you born and in what part of the country did you grow up?

   ________________________________________

3. How did you decide to go into the business or profession you have chosen?

   ________________________________________

   ________________________________________

4. Were there Black role models in your profession or business during the time you were growing up? ____________________

5. What types of difficulties have you had to overcome to get where you are now? Which of those difficulties would be faced by anyone entering your field and which, if any, were caused by racism? ____________________

   ________________________________________

   ________________________________________

   ________________________________________

   ________________________________________

   ________________________________________

   ________________________________________

**Worksheet #2**
*continued*

6. Have conditions changed over the past decades for Black professionals and business people? What conditions, if any, have made it easier to be successful? What conditions, if any, have made it more difficult to be successful?

7. If you have been in your field since the Fifties, what memories do you have of that time period? Can you describe your experience of that era, taking into account the values and societal attitudes of the time?

8. What advice do you have for Black students who wish to enter the professions or are thinking about owning a business? What qualities and attitudes are necessary in order to be successful?

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# Organizations and Leadership

## Objectives

- to list major Black organizations that have contributed to the gains made by African Americans since the early 1900s
- to identify individuals associated with Black organizations and to understand their contributions to African Americans and to the larger society
- to understand the role that organizations play in the lives of Blacks today

## Terms

secular
erudite
nonviolence
eloquent
Islam
sit-in

## Overview

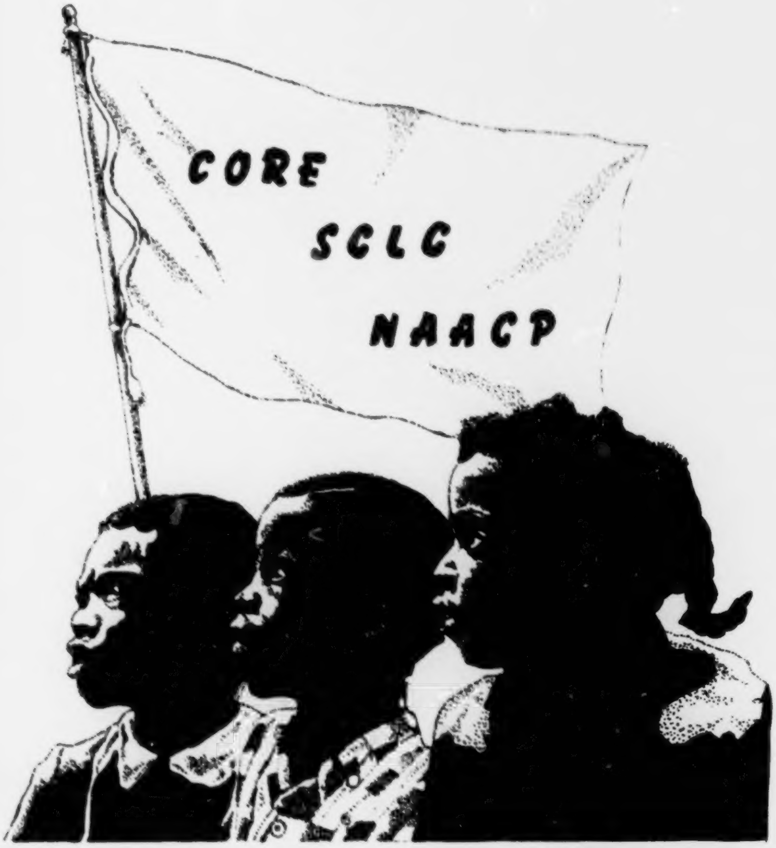
African Americans have traditionally found strength in organization within the church, school, and social group. These many and varied organizations have played a major role in the Black community. Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, Prince Hall, and Frederick Douglass are founding forefathers of African American organizations. W. E. B. Du Bois is a later figure of critical importance.

Richard Allen and Absalom Jones founded the first independent Black churches. Prince Hall, who educated himself in political philosophy during evenings after his work as a day laborer, rose to become a leader of the first Black freedom movement in the colonies. He led the protest of Black soldiers dismissed from the Continental Army because of their color. He signed one of the petitions for freedom for slaves; the petition was submitted to the Massachusetts legislature in 1777. Hall is best known for setting up the first Black Masonic lodge, one of the first secular organizations of Blacks in this country. He also worked for Black education and collective Black social action.

Frederick Douglass was a leader of, and spokesman for, slaves and freedmen. An escaped slave, Douglass spoke and wrote against slavery. His early organizational efforts were focused on the cause of freedom for slaves. He became known as a "station master and conductor" of the Underground Railroad in Rochester, New York. He helped raise two regiments of Black soldiers for the Union Army during the Civil War. After the war and until his death in 1895, he received national recognition as a spokesman for African Americans.

W. E. B. Du Bois, a sociologist and historian, helped lead Blacks' struggle for equality during the early part of this century. He insisted on racial equality in what came to be called the Niagara Movement. The movement began when Du Bois called together twenty-nine prominent individuals whom he respected for a meeting on the Canadian side of Niagara Falls in 1905. The objective was to "inaugurate a permanent national forward movement." Occurring amidst lynchings and other injustices, the movement demanded on behalf of Blacks the right to vote, an end to discrimination, equal justice for all, freedom of speech, and quality education. The momentum of the Niagara Movement, however, slowed as attacks were mounted against it. Many of its ideas and programs were adopted by the NAACP at its formation in 1909. Du Bois directed the publications of the latter organization until 1934.

The organizations founded by Douglass, Hall, Allen, Jones, and Du Bois responded to the political, social, economic, and educational needs of Blacks. Many of the organizations of the Fifties were established on the same principles.



The Fifties followed a period of economic depression and international upheaval. During this period, many Blacks felt that the time was ripe to press for their rights. They organized to obtain these rights and to express their cultural pride. Among the organizations active in the Fifties era were the following.

**Knights of Pythias**, founded in 1864 by Justus Henry Rathbone, is a fraternal organization open to men of any religion. The organization's 200,000 members support many charitable works and encourage high moral standards.

**National Medical Association**, founded in 1895, represents a membership of over 14,000 nonwhite physicians across the United States. Its goals include making sure all health care careers are open to minorities and that quality health care is available to all, regardless of ability to pay.

**National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)**, founded in 1909, seeks equality and better living conditions for all African Americans. It achieves many of its goals through legal or legislative action. The NAACP argued and won the 1954 Supreme Court case declaring racial segregation in the public schools unconstitutional.

**National Urban League**, founded in 1910, works to secure equal opportunities at all levels of society for Blacks and other minorities, especially in the area of employment.

**The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History** was founded in 1915 by Carter G. Woodson. The name was changed in the 1970s to The Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History. The group studies the role of Blacks in world history and promotes understanding among peoples of all ethnic origins.

**Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters**, founded in 1925 by Asa Philip Randolph, began as a union of mostly Black pullman car porters protecting their rights during a critical phase of the American labor movement. The union is now part of the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks.

**The Nation of Islam**, or **Black Muslims**, was founded in Detroit in the early 1930s. Its members demanded "full and complete freedom" for Blacks and urged Black pride. Malcolm X, a Black Muslim leader, did not espouse nonviolence. Instead, he urged self-defense by Blacks against violence and terrorism.

**National Council of Negro Women** was founded by educator Mary McLeod Bethune in 1935 to aid Black women in achieving self-sufficiency. Today, the organization administers a variety of important programs to help children, teens, and women and to fight hunger and malnutrition.

**Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)** presses for the rights of African Americans. Founded in 1942, its purpose was to create a society in which "race or creed will be neither asset nor handicap." James Farmer helped organize CORE and served as its national director until 1966. During the Fifties, CORE's policy was nonviolence and insistence that Blacks should control the institutions within their communities which strongly affected their well-being.

**United Negro College Fund** was organized in 1944 to raise money to help operate predominantly Black private colleges and universities in the United States. It receives contributions from individuals, corporations, and foundations. By the mid-1980s, the United Negro College Fund had raised more than $400 million.

**Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)**, founded in 1957 by sixty Black leaders, mostly ministers from Southern states, became a leading civil rights organization. Its guiding force was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)**, founded in 1960, expressed students' determination to organize and register voters, as well as demand civil rights for Blacks.

These organizations, like all organizations, could not function without leadership which understood the collective experience of those the organization supported. W.E.B. Du Bois, A. Philip Randolph, and other Black leaders had laid a solid foundation for the organization of Black people and developed strategies which Martin Luther King was able to use in the civil rights movement. This struggle was carried on by strong Black leadership, the Black press, and sympathetic Whites, guided by the vision of Martin Luther King, its erudite and eloquent spokesperson. Among the influential leaders who fought for civil and human rights for all Americans were Adam Clayton Powell, Malcolm X, Elijah Muhammad, Roy Wilkins, and A. Philip Randolph.

The civil rights movement mobilized Blacks and many Whites as never before. Though mistakes were made, the movement was too great to be stopped. In 1960, sit-ins were repeatedly staged throughout the South. Freedom Rides, organized by the Congress of Racial Equality, and the activities of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, added further impetus to the movement. In August of 1963, a march on Washington unified and expressed the ideals of the leadership of the Black community. On that momentous occasion, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. addressed over two hundred thousand people at the Lincoln Memorial. Through television he spoke to millions of Americans watching at home. His stirring words challenged the nation to live the meaning of its creed. His call was answered with the passage of critically important civil rights legislation in 1964 and 1965. Though King's dream for America has not yet been achieved, this legislation represented a great victory for the civil rights movement.

## Activities

1. Have students list organizations they or their family members support. Encourage students to find out the purposes of the groups, how long the family member has been a supporter, and what first drew the family member to each group. Tell students to include all types of groups in their research—church and civic groups, political parties, fraternities and sororities, clubs such as the Boy Scouts and 4-H, and labor or professional organizations. Students will realize that groups exist for almost every interest or cause. Students will also realize that individuals give different levels of support to groups, depending on their commitment to the group's mission and purpose. After students list the groups supported by themselves or their families, they should measure the degree of commitment. What does the student or family member give back to the group—time? money? volunteer work? What do members get from the group? How do these organizations help their members or the community as a whole? Finally, in the light of this deeper understanding of American organizations, review with students the general purpose or mission of each Black organization discussed in class.

2. Many of the well-known Black men studied in this curriculum were Masons (Count Basie, Nat King Cole, Benjamin Hooks, Thurgood Marshall, Richard Pryor, and Booker T. Washington, to name but a few). Ask students to research the Masons. There may be a Masonic Temple near your school, or students may personally know Masons. Have students report on the history of the organization, its European roots, its traditions and mission. How has the organization changed over the years? What are its current goals? How large is its membership?

3. There are many Black fraternities and sororities that have been organized with personal, social, and civic goals in mind. The roots of these organizations can be found in the government of ancient Greece. The officers and duties of fraternities and sororities are identified by words that are derived from Greek. Some of them may be unfamiliar to students. Ask students to look up the following words in the dictionary: **fraternity, sorority, parliamentarian, phylactery, pecuniary, epistler, Hodegos, Philocter**. Discuss in class the meanings of the words as well as the Greek words from which they were derived.

4. Invite a member of a Black fraternity or sorority from the community to speak about his/her organization. Ask the speaker to talk about the history of the organization, the Greek names of the officers, and the civic accomplishments of the group. Students may want to know why the group was organized with Greek traditions and words. Students may also want to know the rules of the organization and how a person may become a member.

5. Students will have realized by now that groups can sometimes accomplish goals that would be much harder for an individual acting alone to accomplish. Have students divide into groups of three or four and decide on one school-related goal they would like to accomplish. Allow students to be creative as they select a goal. Goals can include improving cafeteria food, raising money for equipment, improving the grades of the individual group members, or changing rules in the school. Ask students to decide how their group can implement change, how they will attract members, how they will publicize their goals, and how they will run their organization. (Note: The important focus of this exercise is the practice in organization and planning, not that the plan be implemented or that changes be made.)

**Worksheet Activity**

1. Write out the full names of the following organizations usually identified by their initials:

CORE ________________________________________

SNCC ________________________________________

NAACP _______________________________________

SCLC ________________________________________

2. What African American leader is recognized for organizing the first Black Masonic lodge? ________________________________

3. Richard Allen and Absalom Jones are known for founding what organization?

________________________________________________

4. What escaped slave was known as a "station master and conductor" of the Underground Railroad? ______________________________

5. Which Black organization successfully argued the 1954 Supreme Court case *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*? ____________________

________________________________________________

6. With what Black organization was Malcolm X associated? _______________

________________________________________________

**Worksheet Activity**
*continued*

7. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was the guiding force behind which leading civil rights organization? ______________________________

8. What event in August, 1963, unified and inspired the Black community in working toward social justice? ______________________________

9. What is a sit-in? ______________________________

______________________________

______________________________

10. What student organization registered voters to further the cause of social justice and civil rights? ______________________________

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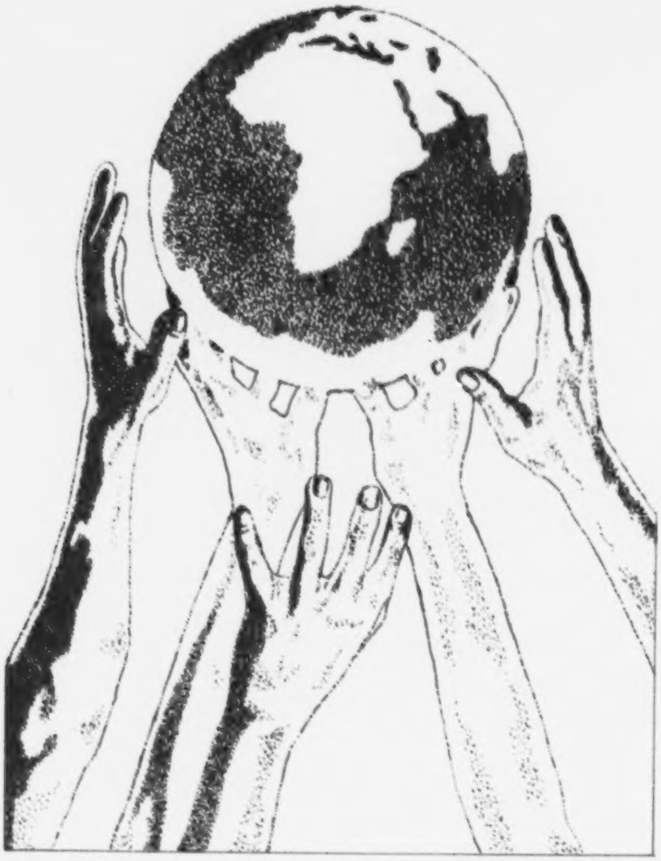
# PUBLIC LIFE



# Media

**Objectives**

to identify the impact of the media on the civil rights movement

to list the limitations of White-owned media and the effect of those limitations on Black people and leaders

to understand the history of Black-owned media and identify major Black periodicals

**Terms**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| media | coverage | circulation | entrepreneurial |

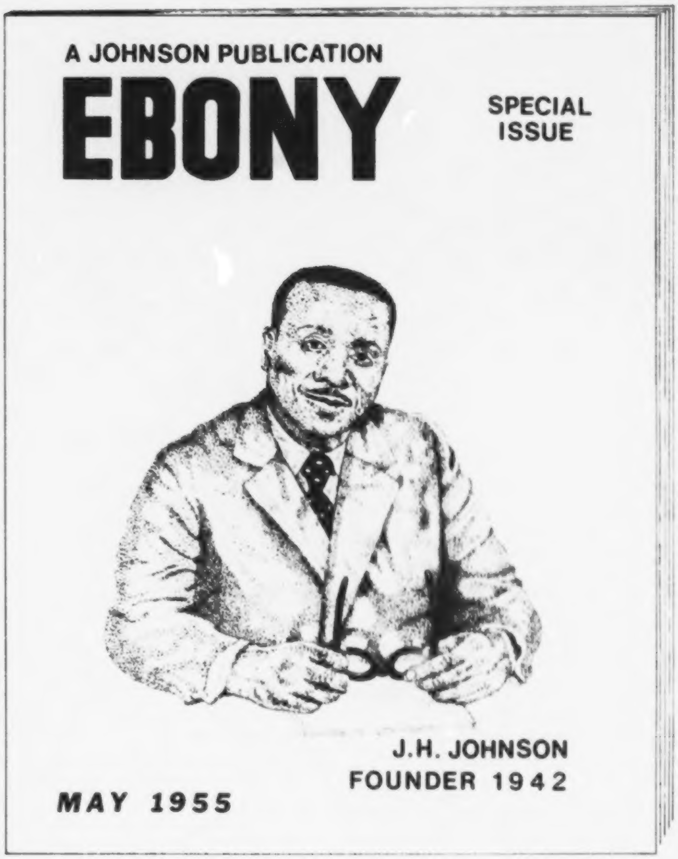
**Overview**

> As a neutral instrument of power, the press can be used as a means to reinforce reaction, to serve the status quo, or to advance dynamic social change. Recognizing its role as such a potential instrument, all who wish to control the direction of society have historically sought to control the press. (from Jeanette Hopkins, *Racial Justice and the Press: Mutual Suspicion or "The Saving Remnant"?* Paper No. 1, New York Metropolitan Applied Research Center, Inc., 1968, p. 5.)

The civil rights movement was a profound political statement made by African Americans during the Fifties era. It captured the attention of the nation, insisting that it recognize and correct injustices to Blacks. It touched education, business and economics, basic democratic rights like voting and freedom of speech and assembly, reaching even into the arts, sports, and communication. In its bid to arouse the conscience of America, the movement sought to make use of the power of the media.

Media may be defined broadly to include newspapers, magazines, radio and television, and other forms of communication. Media was critically important to Blacks in their struggle against inequities and indignities forced upon them for centuries. As Gunnar Myrdal had noted shortly before the beginning of the Fifties era, "to get publicity [was] of the highest strategic importance to the Negro people." (Hopkins, p. 5.) Media coverage, however, may be a two-edged sword. It may "arouse fear and dismay as well as conscience." (Hopkins, p. 5.) The press' interpretation of events strongly influences public reaction to news. It may help determine whether attitudes and perceptions are favorably or unfavorably influenced.

Perceptions of the media's effect may also vary. Jim Reston, describing the coverage of the civil rights movement, said, "The televison reports of racial strife in the American South undoubtedly aroused the conscience of millions of viewers and helped produce the nationwide protest movements and the legislation that transformed the legal position of the American Negro in the mid-1960s." (Hopkins, p. 6.)



On the other hand, Whitney Young criticized the press in the mid-1960s for "failing to show that the Negro's grievances are real." He continued, "To read the newspapers, you might think the Negro is reacting to some mild inconvenience. Instead, the press should drive home the fact that this is a catastrophe, a disaster, an emergency. . . . The press plays up the bizarre, the dramatic . . . What about the success stories? We never read about them." (Hopkins, p. 11.)

Many Black leaders felt the frustration of responding effectively to the realities both statements reflected. Blacks wanted coverage, but not the wrong kind. Often the events which made the news resulted in a limited or incomplete perspective on Black experiences and objectives. Moreover, often African American protest efforts had to be purposely provocative. John O'Connor noted that:

> In order to bring themselves to widespread attention, those on the periphery of our society were forced to stage events. They must typically assemble themselves in an inappropriate place at an inappropriate time in order to be deemed newsworthy. The problem, of course, was that the issues tended to get lost in the drama of the protest. Protests, though, were the primary vehicle for bringing ' the invisible man' to center stage in the scenario of the Civil Rights movement. . . . These were not race riots. They were the legitimate protests of American citizens demanding their legal rights. (John J. O' Connor, "T.V. & Civil Rights: The Medium is Still the Message," *Perspectives: The Civil Rights Quarterly, Washington, D.C.*: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 14 (2), 39-41.)

There was media coverage of the movement by both Black and White media of the day. White viewpoints dominated, for the White media controlled more newspapers, magazines, and nonprint communication than the Black media. Within the White press corps, however, there were those who supported the civil rights movement and helped touch the consciences of the public. Blacks had to depend on these voices and perspectives, and often were disappointed by the omissions or superficiality of their expression.

One problem was that the White media generally focused on events rather than underlying causes. While the Black media advocated political and social change on many fronts, the White media contented itself for the most part with recording attention-getting events. Blacks, who hoped for more far-reaching investigative reporting, were sometimes left unsatisfied.

The Black media also underwent changes as a result of the events of the time. Its traditional tasks had been to record the important events of the Black community in a sober and realistic way. Its approach was more inclusive. The average African American's best chance of finding his or her name in the newspaper was still with the Black press. Members of the Black press, moreover, found that recognition and financial reward eluded them. These rewards usually found their way to the White media. Furthermore, Black media often found it necessary to use sensationalist reporting to gain readership; often this included emphasis on violent crimes like rape and murder.

With the advent of the civil rights movement, however, many of the best Black journalists were able to cross over into the White media establishment, with corresponding loss to Black media. As the essence of civil rights objectives were realized, more and more of the best of the Black press became absorbed into the White press.

Furthermore, television captured much of the market which had supported the Black press. Where once Black Americans had seldom appeared, now they enacted daily the new events of the movement, the longest running news event in the land. With their circulations significantly affected, Black news publications faced the threat of diminished significance, of relegation to watchdog status.

Then a new rising star, the Black magazine, emerged as a voice within the Black community. The Black magazine made enormous strides during the Fifties era, even in the face of television's appeal. New Black magazines covered a variety of interests, from family entertainment to politics to sports to the arts. *Ebony* and other Black periodicals focused on the achievements of Black individuals and provided commentary on topics of interest to Blacks across the nation. The Johnson Publishing Company, which produced *Ebony, Jet,* and *Tan* grew in power, as did similar enterprises.

Other Fifties era entrepreneurial efforts included the *Chicago Defender* and its chain of newspapers, the Cleveland *Call and Post, The St. Louis Argrus, The San Francisco Sun-Reporter,* the *Michigan Chronicle,* and many others. They are still writing about the Black experience in America and still interpreting local, national, and international news for the Black community. They remain alert for unacceptable treatment of people of color. Like its readership, the Black press has survived.

## Activities

1. *Life* magazine attempted to illustrate the news stories and the everyday lives of Americans for many years. It will be interesting for students to take special note of how a particular White-owned magazine covered Black people and leaders and Black-dominated events during the Fifties era. Have students use the library to find copies of *Life*. Make each student responsible for one year of the magazine between 1945 and 1965. After each student is assigned a year to cover, allow students to choose one or two categories from the following: cover, advertising, prominent people, news events, everyday life, sports, entertainment. Have students list the occasions for Blacks being shown or mentioned in their particular categories and years.

   After each student has completed his/her survey, allow the class to compare their statistics beginning in 1945 and continuing through 1965. Have students analyze the data by asking whether stories and pictures of Blacks increased over the years. Did stories about Blacks seem to fall into one or two particular categories, or were they spread evenly over the categories? When did advertisers begin to show Blacks as models? How many covers over the twenty-year span showed Blacks? How did images change as industries identified Blacks as major markets? Allow time for discussion and for students to draw conclusions about their study.

2. Every story has more than one version, depending on who are telling the story, what they observed and what preconceptions they bring to the story. The class will better understand this concept through studying current newspaper editorial pages. Explain that while news stories themselves are supposed to be objective, editorials are written to allow the owners and editors of the paper to state their opinions. Ask students to select one of the local newspapers and read the editorial page for the next two or three days. Ask them to summarize what opinions are expressed. Do those opinions relate to any stories currently in the news? If so, how might those opinions influence the reporting of the news? Is it possible to write a completely objective news story? Students should understand that the news can be reported in different ways, depending on the opinions of the people who own the stations and the papers.

3. Assemble a panel of journalists from your local paper and television stations. If a Black or minority magazine or newspaper is published locally, invite a spokesperson of that periodical to be on the panel as well. Encourage students to ask questions about how journalists try to eliminate bias from their reporting and how they deal with their own personal opinions when reporting the news. Students may want to know what current issues reporters find especially hard to cover objectively. What does each paper or station do, if someone accuses it of unfair or distorted reporting?

4. Freedom of speech and expression, a right guaranteed to Americans by the U.S. Constitution, is used to protect the news media from harassment and lawsuits by the people who are written about. This right has also been used by hate-mongering groups such as Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan to defend their inflammatory speeches, assemblies, and booklets.

   Ask students to roleplay a situation in which students defend differing points of view: the mayor of a small town, the town's police chief, an American Civil Liberties Union lawyer defending the Klan's right to speak, and Black and White citizens of the town. Have these characters decide whether to allow an avowed KKK leader to speak in their public auditorium. While none of the characters agree with the KKK, the argument comes down to whether the right of freedom of speech should be extended to an offensive group.

   This type of argument is not unknown in American communities. In 1977, for example, a group of self-proclaimed Nazis requested a permit to march in front of the Skokie, Illinois, village hall dressed in Nazi uniforms. Skokie stopped the march temporarily, and the Nazis filed suit. The Illinois Supreme Court ruled that the Nazi march was protected by the First Amendment. Share these facts with students before the roleplay and encourage them to find news magazines from 1977 that report the Skokie story so they can fully understand the scope of the argument.

   If this fictional KKK rally is held and many people attend, ask students whether the news media should report it. Should the media give a platform to groups that may incite violence and hatred?

5. Take a trip to a television station to watch the process of editing film footage. How big a factor is time and space in selecting what stories get air time? What do television producers and reporters look for in deciding what story they cover? How important are good photo opportunities for a television news story?

**Worksheet Activity**

Answer the following questions in your own words on the back of this sheet. It may be helpful to read the newspaper or watch local and national television news for a few days in order to answer the questions.

1. In the 1960s, Whitney Young criticized the press for failing to show that the grievances of Blacks were "a catastrophe, a disaster, an emergency. . . ." Are any news events currently being shown as an emergency? Can you think of any news stories that should be written in catastrophic terms?

2. During the 1960s, a commentator noted that "in order to bring themselves to widespread attention, those on the periphery of our society were forced to stage events. They must . . . assemble themselves in an inappropriate place at an inappropriate time in order to be deemed newsworthy." What events was John O'Connor referring to? Are any groups currently using the tactics of the 1960s to bring attention to their causes?

3. Jeanette Hopkins, in her study *Racial Justice and the Press,* quoted Gunnar Myrdal as saying, ". . . all who wish to control the direction of society have historically sought to control the press." Based on your studies in this unit and your own opinions, react to that statement. How does control of the press lead to control of society? Why do dictatorships traditionally close or take over the media? Does any one group control the media in this country? What effect does the media have in this country?

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# Science and Medicine

## Objectives

to identify Black doctors and scientists and their contributions in their fields
to identify diseases and conditions for which Black people are at high risk
to explore health care traditionally and presently available to Blacks and its effects on their well-being

## Terms

chromosome
mortality
life expectancy

## Overview

Despite the frustrations of completing higher education and achieving professionalism in a segregated world, Black scientists and doctors made valuable contributions in their fields over the years. George Washington Carver discovered new uses for agricultural products such as the peanut. Dr. Ernest Just, a biologist at Howard University, completed research on the chromosome structure in animals. Dr. Daniel Hale Williams set up the first training school for Black nurses in the United States. Williams also performed the first successful operation on the human heart. Dr. Charles Drew did pioneering work in blood transfusion and became the first director of the American Red Cross blood bank.

Perhaps the greatest concern of Black doctors and scientists, however, was the health and well-being of Blacks in general. Blacks in America traditionally received poor health care. Even in the mid-1940s, life expectancy for Blacks lagged ten years behind that of Whites. At the same time, Black mortality was 71% higher than Whites'. In 1947, one writer noted that:

> Nearly all diseases which show excess mortality in the Negro are classed as preventable. Conditions like tuberculosis, maternal and infant mortality and venereal disease, regularly show high incidence in any group of low economic status where there is ignorance, overcrowding, poor nutrition, bad sanitation, and lack of medical care. (Montague Cobb, " Medical Care and the Plight of the Negro," *The Crisis*, Vol. 54, No. 7, p. 201.)

Logistically, socially, and economically, health care was not as accessible to Blacks as to Whites. Blacks in rural areas felt this inequity the most. In 1942, the nation averaged a ratio of one physician per 750 people. Within the Black health care field, there was one physician for every 3,377 Black citizens. In Mississippi, the ratio was one to 18,527.

Most Black physicians were trained at Meharry Medical College or Howard University Medical School. Training for physicians was a racially segregated experience. Black physicians were confronted with racism in every aspect of their career, from acceptance into medical schools to internship and residencies.

Black physicians also found their facilities more meager, their budgets tighter, and their equipment more dated than those of White physicians. Black hospitals, moreover, were often makeshift or refurbished quarters. In many cases, Black communities received older buildings vacated when White medical staff moved to new structures.

In the Fifties era, Blacks made progress in the fields of medicine and science, but much still needed to be accomplished. Blacks needed to secure equal educational opportunities before they could perform up to their potential in professional careers in these fields, and hospitals, like schools, churches, and lunch counters, awaited integration.

At the same time, Blacks were engaged in fields of scientific inquiry other than medicine. For many years, African American scientists did not receive adequate recognition for their contributions. Nevertheless, they did research, developed inventions and methodologies, and made scientific discoveries in a variety of fields from astrophysics to zoology. Their contributions were valuable in their fields, and this study recognizes some of those contributions.

## Worksheet Activity

Circle the answer which correctly completes the sentence.

1. The Black scientist who discovered many new uses for the peanut was:
   - **a.** Dr. Daniel Hale Williams.
   - **b.** George Washington Carver.
   - **c.** Dr. Ernest Just.
   - **d.** Benjamin Banneker.
2. Blacks in America traditionally received:
   - **a.** excellent health care.
   - **b.** poor health care.
   - **c.** health care equal to that Whites received.
   - **d.** health care benefits paid for by employers.
3. Dr. Daniel Hale Williams:
   - **a.** set up the first training school for Black nurses in the United States.
   - **b.** performed the first successful operation on the human heart.
   - **c.** studied chromosome structure in animals.
   - **d.** a and b.
4. The first director of the American Red Cross blood bank was:
   - **a.** Dr. Daniel Hale Williams.
   - **b.** Dr. Charles Drew.
   - **c.** Dr. Ernest Just.
   - **d.** Dr. Percy Julian.
5. In the mid-1940s, life expectancy for Blacks lagged behind that of Whites by about:
   - **a.** five years.
   - **b.** twenty years.
   - **c.** ten years.
   - **d.** four years.

**Worksheet Activity**
*continued*

6. In 1942, the national average ratio of physicians to people was:
    a. 1 to 250.
    b. 1 to 450.
    c. 1 to 750.
    d. 1 to 2,000.
7. Within the Black health care field at the same time, the national ratio of Black physicians to Black citizens was:
    a. 1 to 500.
    b. 1 to 1,000.
    c. 1 to 2,366.
    d. 1 to 3,377.
8. Most Black physicians were trained at:
    a. Meharry Medical College or Howard University.
    b. Meharry Medical College or Wilberforce University.
    c. Howard University or Vanderbilt University.
    d. Howard University or Wilberforce University.
9. Black physicians in hospitals suffered from:
    a. meager facilities and tight budgets.
    b. shabby quarters and dated equipment.
    c. a and b.
    d. none of the above.
10. Black physicians and scientists:
    a. received inadequate recognition for their contributions in their fields.
    b. engaged in many fields of scientific inquiry.
    c. made important inventions and discoveries.
    d. all of the above.

## Additional Activities

1. Have students interview older Black members of their community to discover what kinds of health care were available to them during the Fifties era. Students may wish to ask them to compare features of health care available then to features of care available now. Encourage students to find out if discrimination was a factor in health care then or now. Caution students to take careful notes or to use a tape recorder. You may want to have students report orally or in writing about the results of their investigations.

2. Encourage teams of students to create a television documentary on African American scientists and inventors of particular interest to them. Each team's task would be to research a scientist and his/her contribution to a field of specialization. Encourage each student to do library research and/or to interview individuals of prominence in the same field as the subject.

   Students may wish to choose subjects from the list below.

   a. Charles Drew, who developed a way to preserve blood to be used in blood transfusions
   b. Matthew A. Henson, an explorer who, with Robert Peary, was first to reach the North Pole
   c. Percy Julian, a research chemist who developed new medicines
   d. Garrett A. Morgan, who developed safer fire fighting equipment
   e. Elijah McCoy, who invented a lubricating device for machinery
   f. Theodore K. Lawless, who developed cures for skin diseases
   g. Benjamin Banneker, mathematician and scientist
   h. Dr. Samuel L. Kountz, a kidney transplant surgeon
   i. Jan Matzeliger, who invented the shoe-lasting machine

3. Blacks in America have traditionally received poor health care, and even today life expectancy for Blacks lags behind that for Whites. Ask students to report on the current state of health of Black people in their own county. Have one group of students contact the county or state department of health and ask for local statistics on infant mortality among Blacks, and the leading causes of death among Black people. If these statistics are not available locally, students can research national statistics by writing to the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta or to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in Washington, D.C. Have other groups of students research some of the diseases that occur only in Blacks or occur with more frequency in Blacks: sickle cell anemia, hypertension, and diabetes. Have students make oral reports to the class about their findings.

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# Armed Forces

**Objectives**

to understand the meaning to Blacks of the Double V campaign during World War II

to identify President Roosevelt's actions and inactions toward Black civil rights during the war years

to list examples of unfair treatment of Blacks within the armed services and within the war industry at home

**Terms**

isolationism

**Overview**

Like many other sectors of American life, the armed services presented challenges and frustrations to African Americans in the Fifties era. During World War II, Blacks had difficulty finding jobs in the war industry. In the military, they were often relegated to support services. A caption in the July, 1940, issue of *The Crisis* magazine expressed their frustrations. A picture in the magazine showed Air Force planes flying over an aircraft factory turning out new planes. Near the picture was the line, "For Whites Only—Negro Americans may not help build them, repair them, or fly them, but they must help pay for them."

A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, planned a march on Washington for July 1, 1941, to protest discrimination in the war industry, as well as discrimination and segregation in the armed forces. Government officials viewed the planned march with dismay. The question "What will Berlin say?" could not be dismissed. It did not make sense to fight a war against a system that labeled park benches "Jude" in Europe and at the same time condone park benches labeled "Colored" in America.

Initially, President Roosevelt sent Mrs. Roosevelt to discuss the matter with Randolph. Eventually, Roosevelt himself met with Randolph. The president refused to consider desegregation of the armed forces, but did sign Executive Order 8802, the Fair Employment Practices order, forbidding discrimination in the war industries. Many Blacks felt that Executive Order 8802 was less than Blacks should accept, but the government contended that jobs in defense industries were more vital to Blacks than openings and desegregation in the armed forces.

In the South, lynchings of Blacks continued. In Washington, D.C., separate air-raid shelters were being built for Blacks and Whites. In this atmosphere, Blacks popularized the Double V campaign (Victory Abroad—Victory at Home). Double V symbolized Black hopes for a victory over the racism of Hitler's Nazi ideology and Mussolini's fascism. Even more importantly, it symbolized victory over racism in the United States, the country Blacks supported by laboring in the war factories, by participating in rationing and other hardships, and by fighting and dying in combat.

In many ways, wartime intensified the tensions between the races. Blacks wanted to see in practice the democracy they were fighting to protect. The heroism of Blacks was documented throughout the war, and Blacks were ready to insist that they be treated as American citizens, with American rights. Yet when Black soldiers returned home, they found discriminatory practices still in evidence everywhere. Buses, train stations, restaurants, schools, and workplaces were still segregated. Some Blacks who had survived combat were attacked and killed in racial violence at home in the rural South.

GI benefits did help Blacks, as did President Truman's work for integration in the armed services. After the war, many Black veterans were able to attend college and buy homes. As the veterans then helped family members, the effects of GI benefits tended to multiply throughout the Black community.

President Truman in 1948 appointed a committee to examine integration in the armed forces. The committee's report, "Freedom to Serve," was a plan for achieving integration. The army under Truman implemented the plan in 1949, opening all jobs to qualified personnel, regardless of color. Racial quotas were also abolished. The navy and air force followed suit.

Truman discouraged racial discrimination throughout the government. Many southerners were outraged, and some formed the Dixiecrat party to oppose his election in 1948. The Dixiecrats failed, and integrated troops fought in the Korean War, showing that Black and White soldiers could serve their country shoulder to shoulder. In 1952, in a speech at Howard University, Truman called for a civil rights program enforced by the power of the federal government.

By the mid-1960s, however, some civil rights groups, especially the Congress for Racial Equality and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, were criticizing U.S. military policy and resisting strong Black involvement in the Vietnam War. Throughout this war, there was disproportionately high Black participation in combat, accompanied by high Black casuality rates.

In the 1960s decade, for example, 30% of all Blacks eligible for military service were drafted, in comparison to only 18% of qualified Whites. During the first eleven months of 1966, Blacks comprised over 22% of all army troops killed in action, a figure far in excess of the Black portion of the American population. By 1972, Blacks in Vietnam still represented 17% of combat forces. All these figures suggested to many that African Americans were still being subjected to discriminatory practices which protected White soldiers from dangerous and difficult service at Blacks' expense. Blacks had achieved acceptance into American military forces, but their fair treatment was still in question.

## Activities

1. Have students develop a questionnaire to use to interview veterans of military service. Encourage students to ask the questions they would like answers to about the treatment of Black servicemen and women during war and peacetime.
2. Have students interview Black veterans who served in the military at various times in the past few decades. Have students begin with the questionnaire and encourage them to ask relevant and appropriate questions about the experiences of the people interviewed. The questionnaires and subsequent class discussion will be more interesting if students interview veterans of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, as well as those who served in times of peace.
3. Have student volunteers call or visit local recruiting offices for the military. What kinds of minority recruitment activities are evident? As students look at recruitment literature, have them notice how many pictures show Blacks and what kinds of jobs Black servicemen and women are doing. Ask students to gather statistics on the percentages of Blacks currently in each branch of the armed forces.
4. Take an informal survey of the class or school. How many students would consider the military as a career? What is the attitude of young Black men and women toward the military? What factors in military service seem to be positive and would encourage enlistment? What factors appear negative and would discourage enlistment?

**Worksheet Activity**

Answer the questions below by filling in the blanks.

1. What Black leader planned and organized a march on Washington on July 1, 1941? ______________________________

2. What was the purpose of the march? ______________________________
______________________________

3. What was the government's reaction to the planned march? ______________
______________________________

4. What was Executive Order 8802? ______________________________
______________________________

5. What president signed Executive Order 8802? ______________________

6. Did this order satisfy the desire of Blacks for equality in civilian and military life?
______________________________

7. During World War II, what was the contradiction noted by Blacks in their fighting for democracy and fair treatment for the people of Europe? ______________
______________________________

8. What was the Double V campaign? ______________________________

9. What evidence of American racism against Blacks was found during World War II? ______________________________

10. In what way did the events of the 1940s set the stage for the civil rights movement of the Fifties era? ______________________________
______________________________
______________________________

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# Judiciary

**Objectives**

to list examples of Jim Crow laws that legally enforced segregation of the Black community from the White community

to identify ways in which the doctrine of "separate but equal" damaged the self-esteem of Blacks

to encourage students to join in a drama activity that will enhance emotional understanding of the effects of segregation in the Fifties

**Terms**

- plaintiff
- defendant
- constitutional

**Overview**

In the Fifties era, there were signs everywhere that read NO NEGROES ALLOWED, FOR WHITES ONLY, COLORED SECTION, COLORED ENTRANCE. These "Jim Crow" signs reflected the Jim Crow laws that governed practically every aspect of Blacks' public, social experience. The Jim Crow laws which segregated Blacks from Whites were based on the United States Supreme Court's decision of 1896 in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case. In this case, the highest court in America ruled that Blacks might be compelled to accept separate accommodations as long as they were "equal."

This ruling legitimized several vicious assumptions and intentions. The first was the belief that African Americans as a race were inferior to Whites, intellectually and otherwise. Another was the White refusal to test the belief by mixing with, or providing opportunities to, Blacks. Furthermore, the assumption of Black inferiority allowed Whites to behave openly in prejudiced and unethical ways. Ultimately, African Americans' sense of self-esteem and personal value was undermined; the Black person's entire perspective was clouded by hatred and contempt felt from Whites. One writer noted, "I concluded that as in everything else, the atmosphere of a place is entirely different for Negro and White. The Negro sees and reacts differently not because he is a Negro, but because he is suppressed. Fear dims even the sunlight." (John H. Griffin, *Black Like Me,* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977, p. 107.)

Especially in the South, Blacks were excluded from parks, zoos, theatres, swimming pools, golf courses, concerts, plays, restaurants, hospitals, hotels, airports, churches, elevators, drugstores, and restrooms. Blacks were not permitted to share drinking fountains with Whites, sit in the same doctor's waiting room with Whites, or sit in the same section of public buses with Whites. Separate sections for African Americans were marked off in ball parks, buses, and trains. African Americans were not able to exercise voting rights in the South in the Fifties era, and across the United States they were barred from living in White neighborhoods.

As it chipped steadily away at the African Americans' self-image, segregation also depleted the African American's opportunities to better his quality of life. Griffin wrote:

> The Negro and the South. These are the details. The real story is the universal one of men who destroy the souls and bodies of other men (and in the process destroy themselves). It is the story of the persecuted, the defrauded, the feared and the detested. It traces the changes that occur to the heart and body and intelligence when a so-called first class citizen (the White author) is cast on the junkheap of second class citizenship (the author as black man) . . . The Negro often dreams of things separated from him only by a door, knowing that he is forever cut off from experiencing them. (Griffin, pp. 44-45.)

Segregation began early in the lives of African Americans and White Americans; elementary and secondary schools and universities were segregated by law in the South and by neighborhoods in the North. Schooling for Blacks and Whites was separate, but it was hardly equal.

The education which Blacks saw as their children's best hope for building a better future was from the beginning, by its segregated nature, a clear indication that society believed they were second class citizens. Ambivalence about their value as human beings was one of the first lessons Black children learned as they struggled to improve themselves and their lot in society.

The schools established for African Americans received less money per pupil than the schools for Whites, were often located further distances away, and were often in a state of disrepair. Textbooks, equipment, and furnishings were antiquated, shabby, or substandard. Yet education, even in this dismal light, was a serious matter to most African Americans.

Blacks, in their struggle to free themselves from the oppression of Jim Crow, believed that better schooling and integrated schooling were critically important for their children. Blacks fought in the American court system to strike down the "separate but equal" doctrine.

Several court cases in the 1930s and 1940s led up to the critical *Brown v. Board of Education* case decided by the Supreme Court in 1954. In 1936, when Lloyd Gaines was rejected in his application for admission to the law school of the University of Missouri, he filed suit. When the Supreme Court decided the case (*Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada, Registrar of the University, et al.*) in 1938, Chief Justice Hughes stated that Gaines had been denied opportunities equal to those of White students. Missouri, Virginia, and South Carolina made grudging gestures to provide law school opportunities to Blacks, but without opening White schools to them.

Ada Sipuel applied for admission to the law school of the University of Oklahoma in 1946, and the ensuing court case went all the way to the Supreme Court, which ordered the state to provide equal opportunities for her. Oklahoma, within two weeks, set up a separate law school. Sipuel refused to enter this makeshift institution and re-initiated litigation which resulted in her admission to the university law school in 1949.

Meanwhile, another Black student, G.W. McLaurin, sued to gain admission to the University of Oklahoma graduate school. Winning the suit, he found himself segregated in the library, cafeteria, and classroom. McLaurin sued again, and the Supreme Court ordered an end to the segregation. On the same day, June 5, 1950, the Supreme Court also ordered that Black applicant Herman Sweatt be admitted to the law school of the University of Texas, in spite of the fact that Texas had set up a separate law school for Blacks. The Court ruled that the separate facilities were not equal because they lacked the experienced faculty, the large library, the tradition, standing, and influence of the long-established university law school.

Not until the early 1950s did the NAACP decide to begin a frontal attack on the "separate but equal" doctrine in American public schools. The result was the *Brown* case. Initially, what began as five separate lawsuits, with each plaintiff challenging the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision as unconstitutional, evolved into the landmark case of *Brown v. Board of Education* of 1954.

With the Supreme Court's decision of 1954 that the "separate but equal" doctrine was unconstitutional came the removal of the legal foundation upon which the entire racist structure of Jim Crow rested. The effect was to lift a huge psychological barrier for African Americans. Enforcement of the court decision, however, was another matter. Breaking down the physical barriers that had been in place for so long throughout American society was a long struggle. In this struggle for civil rights and social equality, many people suffered, and some even gave their lives. Indeed, the struggle is still going on, and barriers are still being broken.

This unit, evolving from the *Brown v. Board of Education* case, is an attempt to steep students in the background, struggles, and social and psychological barriers which confronted African Americans through legally sanctioned societal racism in all walks of life. In order to develop students' sensitivities to the racial injustices which existed in the past and which may still exist in some ways in our society today, you may wish to guide students through roleplay, research, and discussion.

An effective method of developing student identification with the struggles of African Americans in the Fifties is the process drama developed by well-known drama theorists and practitioners such as Dorothy Heathcote and Cecily O'Neill. A brief overview of the process drama approach will be provided in this unit. However, for further in-depth study and examples of practical applications of the approach, see *Theory Into Practice* (TIP) (Summer, 1985) and Dorothy Heathcote: *Collected Writings on Education and Drama*, edited by Liz Johnson and Cecily O'Neill.

## Activities

By using the technique of process drama, students will be able to place themselves emotionally in the Fifties and gain a closer look at the impact of Jim Crow laws and segregation. The following step-by-step procedure can be used to help students create a drama which fosters identification with, and deeper understanding of, Black and White Americans of the 1950s and 1960s.

A. Select for the drama a starting point that will capture the interest of students and invite them to commit themselves fully to the drama activity to come. Some possibilities for the starting point are: Black parents and students protesting inequalities in education; Black and White civil rights workers planning sit-ins or freedom rides; the impact of Jim Crow laws on both a Black and White family living in the South; the beginnings of desegregation in schools and in public places.

B. Have students select an event that interests the class as a whole. A deep understanding of the event is necessary and can be obtained by students' library research, interviews with community members who lived through the time period or event in question, and reading from the bibliography included in this curriculum. (For instance, if the class decides to dramatize the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* case, reading news magazines and newspapers from 1954 would yield editorials, letters, pictures, analysis, and stories that could be used in creating the drama.)

C. After the students become familiar with the event and the time period, allow the class the opportunity for brainstorming and discussion. During this period, class members can determine the roles that would contribute to the unfolding of the drama. Again, using the *Brown* case as an example, the class might decide to provide parts for the following actors: the Brown family, school personnel sympathetic to desegregation as well as those opposed to it, the nine Supreme Court justices, lawyers for all sides, representatives of the NAACP, and newspaper reporters. The possibilities for roles are endless, depending on what vision the class has for its drama.

D. After the class decides what roles will comprise the drama, allow students to choose or try out for the parts they want to play. Encourage some students to be writers and directors. It will be the role of these students to help the process move along. They can also suggest words or actions to other students who may be uncertain about what to do next.

E. Students should research their parts until they feel that they understand the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the real persons they are being asked to portray.

F. The writers and directors must then decide on the scenes within the drama. Scene 1 may include one of the Brown children in school. Scene 2 may show the Brown family discussing their school. Scene 3 may show a teachers' meeting at the school. Scene 4 may show representatives of the NAACP talking to the Brown family or among themselves. The writers will decide what actors to include in each scene and also decide what conflict or issue should be portrayed in each scene. The writer's finished work for each scene might look like this:

**Scene 1**

*Actors:* Teacher in a segregated Black school
One of the Brown children
Several classmates

*Action:* Class is eager to take a field trip to a local museum. The teacher has to tell the class that no school bus is available for the all-Black school.

The writers will continue to add scenes until the class feels that the entire story has been included.

G. After the scenes are decided upon, the class will break into appropriate groups to role-play each scene. Students will be working without a script. They will decide how each scene is to begin and end. Remind students to stay in character—reacting as their characters would react, speaking as they would speak. When each group is satisified with its scene, satisfied that the emotions and dialogue are both honest and interesting, the group should perform the scene for the rest of the class. Allow the class to offer suggestions and comments for dialogue and action. If the scene needs reworking, allow each group the time to do this.

H. When each scene and part has been perfected, students should be allowed to give the play for their own class and other interested classes. An important part of this activity is giving actors the chance to talk about their feelings as they played each part, and audience the chance to discuss how they felt as they watched the drama unfold. This activity provides an opportunity for students to learn on both an intellectual and emotional level. Encourage discussion of the experience on all levels.

The Supreme Court played an important role in expanding the civil rights of minorities during the Fifties era. Students can learn more about the Supreme Court and its role while researching and completing the worksheet activity. Encourage students to check encyclopedias, periodical guides, and other resources to find the answers to questions.

**Worksheet Activity**

Over the years, the words of the Constitution have remained the same, and yet what we consider to be "constitutional" or "unconstitutional" has changed. The writers of the U.S. Constitution knew that as the world changed, new questions would arise. They created the Supreme Court to interpret the words of the Constitution in the light of new questions and situations. The world and the Supreme Court changed between the years 1896 (*Plessy v. Ferguson*) and 1954 (*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*). The U.S. changed from a nation that legally tolerated unequal treatment of its citizens to one that did not. Understanding the Supreme Court is very important to understanding how this country can change its practices, laws, and ultimately, its attitudes.

Taking into account the role of the Supreme Court, answer the questions below. Some of the questions will require research. Use encyclopedias, textbooks, periodicals, and other resources to find the answers.

1. Who appoints the members of the Court? ____________________

2. What legislative body must approve these appointments? ____________________

3. How many judges sit on the Supreme Court? ____________________

4. Who are the current Supreme Court justices? ____________________

____________________________________________

____________________________________________

____________________________________________

____________________________________________

5. Why was the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* important in Supreme Court history?

____________________________________________

____________________________________________

**Worksheet Activity**
*continued*

6. What was the *Dred Scott* decision? ______________________

7. What role did the *Dred Scott* decision play in the Civil War? ______________________

8. Explain how the Supreme Court supports the Constitution's system of "checks and balances." ______________________

9. The Supreme Court has frequently been controversial. Find at least one magazine or newspaper article from 1954 that supports or opposes the Supreme Court's action in overturning *Plessy v. Ferguson.*

10. Share the article that you have found with the class. What attitudes are reflected in the article you have found? Compare the attitudes of today with those stated or implied in your article. Have attitudes changed or stayed the same? If they have changed, how have they changed? Share your opinion about the attitudes toward the Supreme Court that appear in your article. Write your answers on the back of this sheet.

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# Civil Rights

**Objectives**

to list the kinds of racial oppression that characterize the history of Black America

to cite events which initiated the civil rights movement in the United States

to explain the goals and achievements of the civil rights movement, including the role of major Black organizations

to define the movement's major approaches: nonviolence, sit-ins, marches, and demonstrations

**Terms**

boycott
freedom ride
grandfather clause
poll tax
Jim Crow
discrimination
literacy test
segregation
desegregation

**Overview**

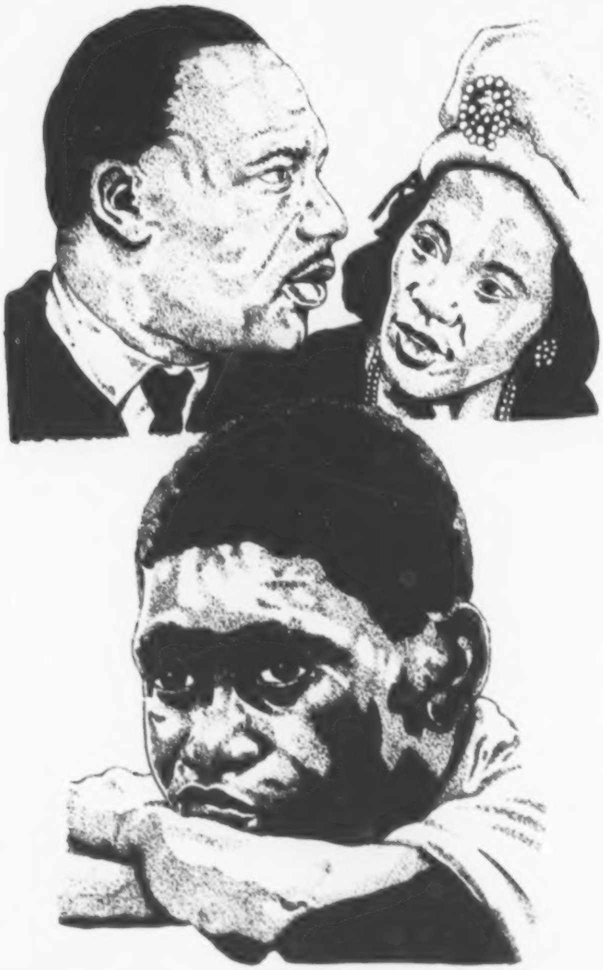
Racial oppression in America has a long history. Many groups have at one time or another been subjected to prejudice and discrimination. Some Native Americans endured enslavement, over generations their homelands were taken, and many were confined to reservations. During World War II, native-born Japanese Americans were forced into internment camps, and their basic rights as U.S. citizens were denied. Only in 1988 did the U.S. Congress provide restitution for the Japanese who had been unjustly incarcerated.

Oppressed throughout most of American history, Black people have long struggled for their rights. During the American Revolution, Black men petitioned the Massachusetts government for the right to vote, echoing the battle cry that led the new nation to independence from British tyranny—taxation without representation. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Black men and women organized the Underground Railroad to help their enslaved brothers and sisters escape to freedom. With sympathetic Whites, they fought to abolish slavery.

After Emancipation in 1865, there was new hope among Black Americans for freedom and true equality. But many southern sympathizers were afraid of Black political power in the South. "Black codes" were passed in many states and even supported by President Andrew Johnson to help keep the newly freed people within a certain kind of bondage. Still, Radical Republicans in Congress were able to get enough support to pass civil rights legislation to help protect the freed people. Most importantly, three amendments to the Constitution were passed. The Thirteenth outlawed slavery; the Fourteenth guaranteed equal protection and due process to everyone; and the Fifteenth defined American citizenship without respect to color, race, or national origin.

These years began as an optimistic period for Blacks. Many were elected or appointed to government offices. But such progress did not last long. Terrorist groups like the Ku Klux Klan resorted to intimidation and violence to limit and destroy the newly gained access to political power. By 1898 the "grandfather clause," poll tax, and literacy tests were being used to negate the Fifteenth Amendment. The Civil Rights Act of 1875 was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. The concept of states rights was reinvigorated, and in many areas of the country Jim Crow became the law of the land.

This new form of racial oppression emerged in the 1880s and 1890s. Jim Crow dictated that Black people had to be "separate" from Whites on streetcars, in restaurants, and in other public places. This system of local laws was made national when, in 1896, the Supreme Court legalized the "separate but equal" doctrine in the case *Plessy v. Ferguson.* Jim Crow laws were thereby sanctioned in post offices, stores, public transportation, libraries, and public buildings. Even bathrooms and drinking fountains were governed by the principle. Every aspect of life for Blacks fell under the "separate but equal" doctrine.



Still, Black people continued to fight. In the early 1900s, a number of new organizations emerged, such as the NAACP and the National Urban League, dedicated to the principle that all people should be treated equally. Boycotts and demonstrations marked the 1930s and the early 1940s. In 1954, when the Supreme Court announced its historic decision in *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*, the civil rights movement already had a very long history. In the epoch-making *Brown* decision, announced on May 17, the court began undermining the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision of 1896, which had established the "separate but equal" doctrine. The court ruled that separate schools were inherently unequal.

In 1956, in the case of *Gayle v. Browder*, the court ruled that segregated bus transportation was unconstitutional. In these two cases, segregation practices were largely outlawed. The *Brown* case had decided that "separate but equal" in the schools was unconstitutional. The *Gayle v. Browder* case indicated that segregation itself was unconstitutional.

The struggle was not yet over—prejudice and discrimination continued to be a reality in the North as well as the South. Black leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. made this a time of consciousness raising in America. They brought world-wide attention to civil wrongs by employing the philosophy of nonviolent civil disobedience. Four major tactics distinguished the movement for civil rights: boycotts, sit-ins, freedom rides, and mass marches.

Rosa Parks, on December 1, 1955, quietly but firmly refused to relinquish her seat on a bus to a White man. She was arrested and charged with violating a city ordinance. The Black community responded three days later, and the Montgomery bus boycott was begun. Ultimately, the Supreme Court ruled that Montgomery buses must end racial segregation, and a major victory was won.

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was formed after the success of the Montgomery boycott. The organization's leader, Dr. King, was convinced that nonviolent civil disobedience was the most powerful weapon for confronting discrimination. Boycotts against segregation and discrimination spread throughout the South. By the early 1960s, college students began to conduct sit-ins at segregated stores and public places. In May, 1961, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), led by James Farmer, sponsored freedom rides—buses with both Black and White passengers. One bus was set on fire and another was attacked by the Ku Klux Klan. During that summer, four hundred freedom riders were arrested and three were murdered.

To focus national attention on the movement, Blacks made a massive, dramatic march to the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, on August 28, 1963. This unprecedented demonstration included Blacks and Whites, the rich and the poor, educated and uneducated, famous and unknown, white and blue collar workers, and people who were unemployed—200,000 Americans from all walks of life. Together they sang "We Shall Overcome," and like millions of Americans watching on televison, were moved by the power and beauty of the words and thoughts expressed by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as he spoke of his dream for America.

Dr. King's dream inspired America and resulted in legislation that improved the conditions in which Blacks lived. In 1964, the Civil Rights Act was passed, a landmark in congressional legislation. The Civil Rights Act set up rules to make it more difficult for officials in the South to prevent Blacks from voting. Literacy tests had to be written, and Blacks and Whites had to be given the same test. The law stipulated that men and women who had finished the sixth grade did not have to take a literacy test.

By ordering an end to discrimination in public places, such as hotels, restaurants, theatres, and countless other places, the law signaled the beginning of the end for White-only/Jim Crow customs. The law empowered the Attorney General of the United States to ensure that school districts took steps to desegregate. The Civil Rights Commission was continued through this legislation, which also prevented the government from providing federal money to any state and local programs that discriminated on the basis of race.

The Voting Rights Act, designed to protect the right to vote for Blacks and other minority citizens, was passed in 1965. Despite its passage, Black voters were still turned away from the polls in some southern states. This sparked additional protests and demonstrations, which eventually led to full voting rights for all Americans.

## Activities

1. Assign students to learn about the organizations that contributed to the success of the civil rights movement. Point out that many of the political and economic gains made by Blacks and other minorities in recent years have been due, in part, to organized activities by groups of committed people. Some groups have become powerful permanent institutions in the American political structure, like the NAACP. Others were formed to address a particular injustice and were dissolved when the injustice was corrected, like the local organization that created the Montgomery bus boycott. Many of the great names in the civil rights movement were founders of groups that exist today.

   Help students form five groups. Allow each group to select one of the following organizations for further research: Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), National Urban League, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the organization effecting the Montgomery bus boycott.

   Ask each group to address the following issues and questions for an oral report to the class:

   a. In what year was the group formed?

   b. Who were the original founders and leaders of the group?

   c. Were there specific events or issues that the group was formed to address?

   d. What were or are the major successes of the group?

   e. Does the group still exist? What is its current membership?

   You may find that your class' interest will be heightened if you contact local chapters of any of the groups for current information about the group's activities. After reports have been made, ask students if they can point out the advantages that organizations and groups have in effecting change. You may wish to conclude that, while individuals play important roles and can be inspiring and charismatic leaders, groups can bring political and economic pressure that frequently leads to change.

2. This activity uses Worksheet #2. The worksheet lists four situations that can be used in the creation of "still photographs." This drama technique can help students explore the possible reactions and feelings of others in an emotional situation. It can be used to help students better understand the pain and struggle of those forced to live with daily discrimination. It also helps students understand the effect of the Jim Crow laws on feelings and self-esteem. Using this technique, students create a scene with three or more participants. When the scene is created, participants freeze as if in a still photograph. While the participants are frozen, the rest of the students discuss the scene and ask and answer questions.

   To begin the activity, divide students into groups. Have students read the worksheet; assign one situation to each group. Each group should work separately and should begin by determining how many participants are needed and what, if any, props are needed. For example, for situation 2 on the worksheet, students may decide that the participants will be the two people who are denied service, the manager or employee who is insisting that they leave, other customers of the restaurant, and other employees of the restaurant. Students may want to put desks together to form tables or a counter.

Next, have each student take a role, determine what feelings and thoughts his/her character would have, and plan how best to convey those feelings and thoughts through body language and facial expression. Explain to students that, although the worksheet explains the events that lead up to the freeze, the group is only to work on the moment of the freeze. The introductory information is designed to help students set the mood and tone of their photograph. The group must determine where the actors will be placed within the scene and how best to tell the story of what is happening. When the group has determined the placement and pose of each participant, it must "freeze" into the still photograph while the rest of the class discusses what it sees.

Help the rest of the class discuss each still photograph by asking the following questions:

a. What do you think each participant is saying to the others?

b. What is each one thinking?

c. What is each one feeling?

d. What do you think would happen after this scene, if it were unfrozen?

One or more participants in the tableaux can unfreeze at the request of the class and take questions from observors about what his/her character is thinking and feeling. This unfreezing allows students to reflect further on their characters' situation.

**Worksheet #1** Match phrases in the left-hand column with phrases in the right-hand column to form correct sentences.

1. "Black codes" kept newly freed slaves
2. Radical Republicans in Congress were able
3. The Thirteenth amendment
4. The Fourteenth amendment
5. The Fifteenth amendment
6. The Ku Klux Klan was
7. The *Plessy v. Ferguson* case legalized
8. In the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision
9. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. believed in
10. Blacks made a massive march on Washington on
11. In 1965, the Voting Rights Act
12. The Civil Rights Act of 1964

August 28, 1963.

outlawed slavery.

a terrorist group.

the "separate but equal" doctrine.

within a certain kind of bondage.

the Supreme Court overturned the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision.

to pass civil rights legislation.

guaranteed equal protection and due process to everyone.

nonviolent civil disobedience.

defined American citizenship without respect to color, race, or national origin.

was passed.

signaled the beginning of the end of Jim Crow customs.

**Worksheet #2** Situations for a Still Photograph

1. Rosa Parks is on a crowded bus on her way home after a long day. She is asked to give up her seat to a White rider and to move to the back of the bus. The scene freezes just as she says no.

2. Two Black people enter a half-full restaurant that has a sign in the window—"Whites Only." They ask the hostess for a table. She calls the manager who appears quickly and asks them if they can read the sign. The scene freezes just as the manager says they cannot eat there.

3. A young person comes home from a job interview. She must tell her family that she has been turned down for a typing job because the company hires Blacks only in maintenance positions. The family was counting on her income to help meet expenses. The scene freezes as she sits with her parents at the kitchen table, telling them the news.

4. Two children in sixth grade are the first Blacks to enter an all-White elementary school. As they enter the school on their first day they are accompanied by their parents. Also in the scene are White parents, teachers, and reporters. The scene freezes as the children walk in the door of the school.

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# Sports

**Objectives**

to cite major events in the integration of sports in America

to list and identify major Black sports figures and their accomplishments

to understand the obstacles encountered by many Black athletes as they competed in collegiate and professional sports

**Overview**

The role of African Americans in athletics has changed significantly over the past few decades. Today, Blacks play on a variety of professional sports teams and excel in individual sports. At the beginning of the Fifties era, however, the color barriers in many sports were yet to be broken.

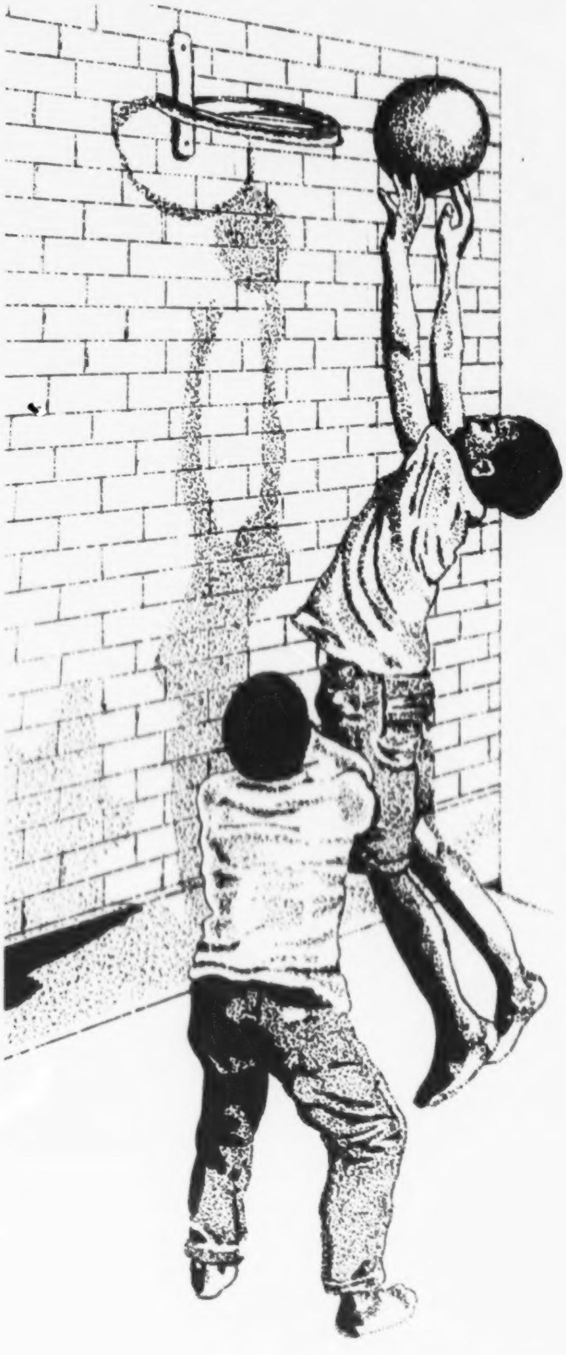
Blacks had participated in some sports before World War II. Jack Johnson became the heavyweight boxing champion in 1908, and Joe Louis became champ in 1937. He was followed by many other Black champions: Ezzard Charles, Jersey Joe Walcott, Floyd Patterson, Sonny Liston, Joe Frazier, Sugar Ray Robinson, George Foreman, and Muhammad Ali. Jesse Owens won four gold medals in track and field events at the 1936 Olympics.

Paul Robeson was a stunning example of athletic, intellectual, and artistic ability. Robeson proved not only that Blacks could excel at sports, but that they could simultaneously excel in other fields. Robeson attended Rutgers University, where he excelled in four sports and was twice an All-American end in football. Robeson was valedictorian of his class, a member of Phi Beta Kappa, and a Rhodes Scholar. After earning a law degree from Columbia University, he embarked on a brilliant career as an actor and singer. Robeson was committed to many social causes: international peace, racial equality, and improved labor conditions. He was in favor of independence for African colonies of European nations. His involvement in these issues and his association with communism led to intense criticism of his work. He represented a powerful combination of athletic and intellectual ability coupled with artistic talent and social commitment.

In spite of sports achievement like the examples cited above, professional team sports continued to be closed to Blacks. Professional baseball did not become integrated until Branch Rickey signed Jackie Robinson for the Brooklyn Dodgers. Then other National League teams followed suit, recruiting both Black and Latin American players. The American League continued for a time to play only Whites, but suffered by losing its edge of superiority to the National League. The factor most responsible for the change in quality of the two leagues was the flow of nonwhite players to the National League. Among the superb Black baseball players of the Fifties era were Roy Campanella, Don Newcomb, Elston Howard, Willie Mays, Hank Aaron, and Roberto Clemente.

Professional football became integrated in the late 1940s. During the Fifties era, several Blacks began satisfying careers with pro teams. Among these players were Marion Motley, Fletcher Joe Perry, Jim Brown, and Roosevelt Brown. Today, professional football has strong Black participation.

Professional basketball was slower than baseball and football in recruiting Black players. In 1950, when Chuck Cooper was signed by the Boston Celtics, he became the first Black to play in the NBA. Blacks appeared on the other pro teams soon afterward. Among the new players were Bill Russell, Elgin Baylor, and Wilt Chamberlain.



Althea Gibson was the first Black tennis player to rank nationally against the best White players. She won the French Open women's singles in 1956. During the following two years she won the United States Open and the Wimbledon singles titles. By 1958, she was ranked number one among women tennis players in the United States.

Blacks made slow progress in collegiate sports, and found that even their occasional participation could lead to conflict. In December, 1955, for example, Georgia Tech and the University of Pittsburgh were set to compete in the Sugar Bowl Game in New Orleans. Pittsburgh's fullback, Bobby Grier, was Black. After a great deal of controversy and several protest demonstrations in Georgia, the Georgia Board of Regents voted to permit the teams to play. But it also adopted a resolution barring Georgia teams from any future post-season games in the South if segregation were not observed. The Sugar Bowl game was played without incident.

In 1955, Jones Junior College of Mississippi accepted an invitation to play in the Junior Rose Bowl Game in Pasadena against Compton College of California. Compton's team included Black players. The game was played, but the situation led to the introduction of a bill in the Mississippi legislature barring college teams in the state from participating in games against integrated teams. In 1956, the Louisiana legislature prohibited all further racially mixed athletic competition in the state. Many sports teams responded by canceling games in Louisiana or rejecting invitations to play in the Sugar Bowl game.

Gradually, college sports accepted Black players, just as professional sports had. When colleges did include Blacks on their teams, they found that the quality of play improved and fans cheered even more enthusiastically than before. The racial violence which many had predicted never occurred; both Black and White players focused all their efforts on winning games.

By the end of the Fifties era, Black athletes had made substantial inroads into American sports. Black America had shown that it could produce fine athletes far beyond its proportion of the population. Sports fans, young and old, cheered their heroes, both Black and White. The sports arenas across the nation had also become arenas where Blacks and Whites learned to support each other in a team spirit.

# A Timeline of Black Participation in American Sports

| | |
|---|---|
| **1940-60** | Sugar Ray Robinson held titles in the Welterweight and Middleweight categories. |
| **1946** | Marion Motley became a fullback for the Cleveland Browns. |
| **1947** | Jackie Robinson joined the Brooklyn Dodgers as the first Black player in the National League. |
| | Larry Doby became the first Black player in the American League. |
| **1948** | Satchel Paige became the first Black pitcher in the American League. |
| | Roy Campanella became a catcher for the Dodgers. |
| | Fletcher Joe Perry was signed by the San Francisco 49ers. |
| | Harrison Dillard won a gold medal in the 100-meter race at the Olympic games. |
| | Mal Whitfield set a new Olympic record in the 800-meter race. |
| **1949** | Don Newcombe became a pitcher for the Dodgers. |
| **1950-57** | Sandy Saddler held the featherweight boxing title. |
| **1950** | Elston Howard joined the Yankees. |
| | Chuck Cooper signed with the Boston Celtics, becoming the first Black player for the NBA. |
| **1951** | Willie Mays was brought up to the major leagues. |
| **1952-61** | Archie Moore held the light heavyweight title and won the Neil Memorial Award. |
| **1952** | Floyd Patterson won a gold medal in boxing at the Helsinki Olympics. |
| | Harrison Dillard won a gold medal in the 110-meter hurdles in the Olympic games. |
| | Mal Whitfield won a gold medal in the 800-meter race at the Olympic games. |
| | Eighteen-year-old Milt Campbell finished second in the Olympic decathlon. Althea Gibson ranked ninth among women tennis players in the United States. |
| **1953** | Gene "Big Daddy" Lipscomb played for the Los Angeles Rams. Roosevelt Brown signed with the New York Giants as an offensive tackle. Althea Gibson ranked seventh nationally in women's tennis. |
| **1954-56** | Bill Russell led the University of San Francisco basketball team to two consecutive NCAA championships. He was voted the 1956 College Player of the Year, and played on the U.S. Olympic team in 1956. |
| **1954** | Rojo Jack, who had begun auto racing in 1923, ended his career. |
| | Althea Gibson ranked thirteenth nationally in women's tennis. |
| **1956** | Frank Robinson began his major league career with the Cincinnati Reds. |
| | Lenny Moore was signed by the Baltimore Colts and named Rookie of the Year. |
| | Milt Campbell set a record for the decathlon in the Melbourne Olympics. |
| | Rafer Johnson finished second in the decathlon at Melbourne. |
| | Althea Gibson won the French Open women's singles. |
| **1957** | Bill Russell signed with the Boston Celtics. |
| | Jim Brown began his professional football career when he signed with the Cleveland Browns. |
| | Charles Sifford, a golfer, won the Long Beach, California, Open Tournament and earned $8,000 on the PGA tour. |
| **1957-58** | Althea Gibson won the U.S. Open and Wimbledon. She was ranked first nationally among women tennis players. |
| **1958-59** | Ernie Banks won Most Valuable Player two years in a row. |
| **1958** | Elgin Baylor was signed by the Los Angeles Lakers. |
| **1960** | Muhammad Ali won the Olympic gold medal in boxing. |
| | Rafer Johnson won the Olympic gold medal for the decathlon. |
| | Wilma Rudolph won three Olympic medals in track. She was voted U.S. Female Athlete of the Year by the Associated Press and was named Outstanding Athlete of the Year by the Europe Sportswriters Association. |
| | Wilt Chamberlain broke eight records in his first year with the Philadelphia Warriors. |

## Activities

1. Have each student learn more about one African American sports figure from the Fifties. After discussing the overview, allow students to choose one athlete, prominent from 1949 through 1959, whom they would like to know more about. Students are to give a written or oral report that includes the following:
   a. an introduction with a short biography of the athlete chosen
   b. information about the athlete's memorable successes or statistics
   c. conclusions about how the athlete contributed to the social and economic growth of the African American community.
2. Distribute one copy of "A Timeline of Black Participation in American Sports" to each student. Allow each student to select a year from the Fifties era and find the sports sections of magazines and newspapers for that year in the school or local library. Ask students to read several articles detailing the sports events of their chosen years. Have students make note of any references to the race of any particular athlete and the reaction of others to the athlete's race. How was the issue of race treated during the year the student researches? Have each student share findings about his/her year with the class.
3. Encourage students to read the biographies of Black athletes. Each student can write a book report, or lead a class discussion that focuses on the athlete's goal, how the athlete felt about his or her situation, and what techniques the athlete used to overcome obstacles, both personal and societal.

**Worksheet Activity** Match the person with the accomplishment by filling in the blank next to the description of his/her accomplishment.

African American Sports Figures

Marion Motley
Althea Gibson
Wilma Rudolph
Roy Campanella
Archie Moore
Milt Campbell
Harrison Dillard
Ernie Banks
Chuck Cooper
Muhammad Ali

1. She won the U.S. Open and Wimbledon. In 1957, she was ranked first nationally among women tennis players. ____________________

2. In 1946, he became a fullback for the Cleveland Browns. ____________________

3. He won a gold medal in the 110-meter hurdles in the 1952 Olympics. ____________________

4. She was voted U.S. Female Athlete of the Year in 1960 by the Associated Press. ____________________

5. In 1960, he won the Olympic gold medal in boxing. ____________________

6. In 1948, he became a catcher for the Dodgers. ____________________

7. He held the light heavyweight title and won the Neil Memorial award. ____________________

8. He was the first Black player for the NBA. ____________________

9. He was baseball's Most Valuable Player two years in a row. ____________________

10. He set a record for the decathlon in the 1956 Olympics. ____________________

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# THE ARTS

# Visual Arts

## Objectives

to identify major Black artists and their contributions to the visual arts

to research and analyze the works of Black artists and to form a personal reaction to those works

to understand twentieth century visual art forms and increase awareness of the Black artists who created works in those forms

## Terms

ancestralism
social consciousness
cubism
expressionism
collage

## Overview

The visual arts are possibly the least recognized cultural contribution Black Americans have made to our society. For years Black artists were virtually ignored in general surveys and studies of American art. During the upheaval of the late 1960s and the 1970s, when scholars in various disciplines were beginning to reevaluate the Black American's impact on the nation's history and culture, exhibitions featuring Black artists became much more common. This newfound interest in the art of African Americans was reflective of, and responsive to, the Black protest movement that challenged the country's institutions of cultural conservation to preserve more equitably the cultures of all the nation's peoples.

Even today, however, important Black artists are often not represented in standard art history texts. Works by relatively few are included in major museum collections. This has resulted from a variety of factors. Historically, prejudice and discrimination played an important role. Black artists have also been plagued by a lack of exposure and by insensitivity and misunderstanding of their work on the part of the elite who control the nation's museums. This is unfortunate, for in their work many African American artists communicate a vision that adds vitality, strength, beauty, and diversity to American artistic traditions. Equally important, through their work Black artists share a perspective that is born of their unique cultural experience as Blacks in America.

Black artists have not always infused their work with their unique cultural experience, however. As Rexford Stead, Deputy Director of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, wrote in 1976:

> For those who know black American art only through contemporary exhibitions of the past decade, it will come as a surprise that so many earlier artists did not reflect *the black experience* in their subject matter. But from their portraits of whites, biblical scenes, and landscapes that have affinities with Cole and Durand, it seems that staying close to the mainstream of American art was a way for black artists to find acceptance and commissions. Perhaps this conformity (or better, sublimation) was in itself another kind of *black experience.* (from introduction to *Two Centuries of Black American Art* by David C. Driskell, New York: Los Angeles County Museum of Art/Alfred A. Knopf, 1976, p. 9.)

Robert Duncanson was the first major African American landscape painter. A free Black living in Cincinnati in the 1840s and 1850s, he earned prominence by painting the stately and dramatic expressions of nature in the style of the Hudson River school. Two of his most famous works are *The Blue Hole, Flood Waters, Little Miami River* and *View of Cincinnati, Ohio, from Covington, Kentucky*. Although chiefly a landscape painter, Duncanson did create one painting, *Uncle Tom and Little Eva*, which expressed the special concerns of Blacks. Duncanson's success grew through the 1850s and 1860s. After the Civil War, his paintings sold for as much as five hundred dollars each, and his skills were much in demand.

Aaron Douglas first turned to Africa for inspiration during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s, and since then many Black artists have created art that reflects their past and their present as individuals and as a people. Aaron Douglas' work, in particular, was admired by Alain Locke, a Black professor of philosophy at Howard University. Locke's critical genius became a guiding light of the Harlem Renaissance, a time of awakening for Black artists. For over thirty years, until his death in 1954, Locke encouraged, and engaged in debate with, many Black artists in many fields. Locke challenged Black visual arts to reflect the "ancestralism" of African art, which had already influenced European artists like Picasso and Modigliani.

Many Black American artists have embraced ancient African traditions in which art is inseparable from life. Such art is not created solely to excite visually, but to join together diverse but interrelated elements of a culture. Such art is used in body adornment and clothing design, and is also a fundamental means through which to communicate social and religious beliefs.

Two Black painters who began in the twenties and became major figures in African American art were W. H. Johnson and Hale Woodruff. As Johnson's interests changed and developed, he produced academic, expressionist, and folk art. Woodruff moved from southern regionalist subjects to abstract work heavily influenced by African legendary and religious symbols. Woodruff also painted murals inspired by his studies in Mexico.

The creation of "art for art's sake," especially during the era of the Fifties, was largely disdained by African American artists. During this era, aspects of the Black experience came shining through much of the art they produced.

This period was dominated by painters Charles White, Elizabeth Catlett, Margaret Burroughs, Beauford Delaney, and Jacob Lawrence. White often worked in charcoal, creating powerful effects in black and white. His works are characterized by a strong social consciousness that later influenced activist artists of the 1960s. Catlett, who was primarily a sculptor, also made prints of heroic Black women. Burroughs used her skills to illustrate Black history.

Beauford Delaney, somewhat apart from Black art's mainstream, began as a portraitist of Black American individuals and types. During the 1930s and 1940s, he developed a bold expressionist style. During the 1950s, he became more lyrical in rendering lighting and surfaces.

Jacob Lawrence became famous for his narrative sequences *Toussaint L'Ouverture* and *Migration*, done in cubist technique. He focused on urban subjects and made urgent social statements.

Romare Bearden was an experimentalist, achieving fame for his work in collage, oil and water monoprint, and cubism. In 1963, Bearden helped form the Spiral Group. These artists committed themselves to work entirely in black and white as an expression of racial conflict. Bearden has continued to work with images of the Black experience, using collage and photomontage to emphasize the distortion and oppression that frequently characterize the life of Black Americans.

James Porter, who wrote *Modern Negro Art* (1943), had an impact on American art both as a painter and as an educator. As an artist, Porter interpreted African American character and the human form. His ability is shown in his portrait of his mother, his work expressing the lives of Black Americans, and his works on African themes. In 1953, Porter became head of the art department at Howard University and director of its art gallery. Like Alain Locke, he was able through his teaching and writing to gain recognition for Black American art.

These artists were crucial in expressing a Black perspective in graphic arts in America. In studying them or any group of artists, you will find it important to recognize that art is a cultural product, and that unique cultural experiences yield unique cultural products. The visual arts show the truth of cultural influence just as music and literature do.

## Activities

1. Allow students to use art encyclopedias and art histories to find examples of works by the artists covered in the overview. Help students discuss the individual styles of the artists. Characterize the major elements of each artist's style in a list on the chalkboard. Ask questions such as the following: What subject matter did the artist favor? What materials did he or she use to create the art (watercolor, oil, or other medium)? What technique did the artist use? Can the artist be identified with a particular style—such as cubist, impressionist, expressionist, modernist, realist? What mood does the artwork evoke in the student?
2. Have each student choose an artist to write about. Direct students to begin by researching the artist's life and artistic convictions. Challenge students to discuss the artist's major works and to analyze and explain the purpose and idea of each work. Students may enjoy sharing their conclusions and explaining paintings or sculptures to classmates.
3. Allow students to write songs or poems inspired by particular works of art. Encourage students to expain the ideological and artistic connections between their work and the artist's work.
4. Have students create an art gallery of Black artists' works in the classroom for a day. Lead a discussion in which students point out how the artists departed from White traditions or patterns to express the Black experience.

**Worksheet Activity** Match the phrases and definitions from the top half of the page with the words and names at the bottom.

1. A modern art style concerned with the abstract and geometric.
2. A time of awakening for Black artists of all types.
3. A Black professor of philosophy at Howard University.
4. Two European artists influenced by African art.
5. A Black artist inspired by African religions and legends, he also painted murals inspired by Mexico.
6. His works, often done in charcoal, show a strong social conscience.
7. Primarily a sculptor, she also made prints of heroic Black women.
8. He began by painting portraits of Black individuals and later developed a bold expressionist style.
9. He wrote *Modern Negro Art* (1943), and he had an impact on American art as both a painter and as an educator.
10. He was the first major African American landscape painter.

A. Elizabeth Catlett ____________

B. Picasso and Modigliani ________

C. Hale Woodruff ______________

D. Harlem Renaissance __________

E. Robert Duncanson ____________

F. Cubism __________________

G. Beauford Delaney ____________

H. Alain Locke ________________

I. Charles White _______________

J. James Porter ________________

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# Music

**Objectives**

- to list specific Black contributions to American music during the Fifties era
- to identify the Black men and women who created and performed new forms of music—blues and jazz
- to list ways in which Black musicians and music influenced the general culture

**Terms**

- jazz
- gospel
- ragtime
- blues

**Overview**

African Americans have contributed profoundly to the shaping of American musical traditions. A creation of Black musicians and vocalists, jazz is considered America's only original music form. Blacks also shaped gospel, ragtime, and the blues, forms which originated before 1920. Later, new kinds of jazz, like bebop, cool, and funk emerged. Other new forms, like rhythm and blues and rock 'n roll also developed. All these kinds of music showcased the talents of Black artists.

Ragtime was most popular in American culture from the late 1890s to World War I. Ragtime is essentially piano music with strong syncopation, arising from Black banjo and percussive styles. Blacks were the major innovators and players of ragtime. Tom Turpin's "Harlem Rag" (1897), "St. Louis Rag" (1903), and "Buffalo Rag" (1904) were among the first ragtime compositions. Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag" (1899) was a sensation and established his reputation. Today we are familiar with Joplin's music as it was adapted for the movie *The Sting*. Ragtime was an important influence of jazz, a dominant musical form in the Fifties era.

The blues is related to some of the same band influences which helped create ragtime. The earliest roots of blues, however, are the work songs and field hollers created by slaves in the South. Initially, the blues was strictly vocal, but as the form developed, blues singers were backed by instrumentalists. Ultimately, many blues compositions became chiefly instrumental in performance.

The blues was always an extremely flexible, never static, form. Blues gave rise to rhythm and blues and contributed strongly to jazz. Rhythm and blues is an urbanized form marked by strong, repetitious rhythms and simple melodies. Along with blues, jazz began late in the nineteenth century. It owes much to

African rhythms, classical music's harmonies, gospel songs and spirituals, work songs, and minstrel show music. Like blues, it was never static, always included improvisation, and gave rise to new forms, like bebop, cool jazz, and funky jazz. Jazz has also increased in complexity. Its most enduring characteristics are its improvisation and its use of a rhythm section, usually including piano, string bass, and drums.

The forms that were most dominant in the Fifties era were blues and jazz. The term "rhythm and blues" was not popularized until the late 1950s. Until then, all blues had been referred to as "race music." *Billboard* began charting race music in 1946, and this gave national attention and recognition to the style.

The most famous blues musicians, those who consciously composed and performed for appreciative audiences, included the following artists. Many of them performed into the Fifties era, some of them influenced it, and a few of them dominated it.

**W. C. Handy** is known as the Father of the Blues. Handy was the first composer to publish a blues song, though the form existed in his culture before he transmitted it. Handy was an instrumentalist and band leader. He also set up a publishing company for Black musicians' work.

**Papa Charlie Jackson, Blind Lemon Jefferson,** and **Leadbelly** (Huddie Ledbetter) were rural blues singers.

**Bessie Smith** was known as the Empress of the Blues. Her blues singing was tremendously successful in the 1920s. She sang urban or classic blues, with the backing of an instrumental group.

**Gertrude Ma Rainey** was one of the most famous blues singers of her time. She toured the South extensively in the 1920s.

**Ethel Waters, Alberta Hunter,** and **Blanche Calloway** were known as ballad singers, but also sang blues.

**B. B. King,** sometimes called King of the Blues, is a singer/guitarist. To many, he seems representative of the Black musicians who worked for years without recognition or financial reward for their artistic contributions. King had been a professional musician for two decades before he made his first big hit, "Why I Sing the Blues" (1969), a biting social commentary.

**Billie Holiday** was the most compelling blues singer of her time. She also sang jazz and popular songs. She recorded with Benny Goodman and other orchestras in the thirties. Her autobiography *Lady Sings the Blues* describes the hardships of her childhood in a Black ghetto. During the 1940s, she was adored for her talent and beauty. After 1950, her career was marred by her increasing drug addiction.

The jazz musicians who most influenced the Fifties era include both singers and instrumentalists. Some of them are legendary, spanning the decades and making inestimable contributions to American music.

**Jelly Roll Morton** was a pivotal figure in early jazz. He began his career in the cradle of jazz, New Orleans, about 1902. He began recording jazz in Chicago in 1923 and made a series of historically important records for the Library of Congress in 1938.

**Louis Armstrong,** perhaps the single most important jazz innovator, influenced countless other musicians through his unique style and creativity as a trumpet player and vocalist. He commanded attention from the twenties through the sixties.

**Duke Ellington** arrived in New York from Washington in 1922. He was an excellent pianist, but his greatest talents lay in building an orchestra and composing. He was the first to create extended jazz pieces and to give jazz concerts on a regular basis. He became famous while performing at the Cotton Club in Harlem in the late 1920s and was still composing vigorously in the Fifties era.

**Count Basie** was a pianist and band leader who became famous in the 1930s for helping create the swing band music that was a new development in jazz. The Count Basie Orchestra became famous and strongly influenced the development of bebop and cool jazz. Count Basie was a leading figure in the Fifties era. His autobiography *Good Morning Blues* (1986) was published after his death.

**Sidney Bechet** was a great jazz musican whose instruments were the soprano saxophone and the clarinet. Bechet traveled to Europe with Will Marion Cook's Syncopated Orchestra in 1919 and decided to stay. He spent most of his life there. Honored and acclaimed, he died in 1959.

**James P. Johnson,** a jazz pianist, backed jazz and blues singers such as Bessie Smith and Ethel Waters.

**Mary Lou Williams** was the greatest of the female jazz pianists. She was also a band arranger and composer for church and concert hall.

**Billy Eckstein** was the most popular Black male jazz vocalist in the thirties. He went on to lead his own orchestra.

**Ella Fitzgerald**, a jazz singer of unequaled talent, recorded with Louis Armstrong and the Mills Brothers. She made very successful solo recordings, was consistently named Jazz Vocalist of the Year, and became one of the most popular jazz singers of all time. She became world famous when she began touring with the "Jazz at the Philharmonic" group of musicians and singers in 1946.

Bebop arose in the early 1940s in Harlem. There a group of musicians including Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, and Thelonious Monk began experimenting with complicated chord patterns and melodies. The dazzling new sound they created came to be called bebop or simply bop. The development marked jazz's evolution away from being primarily a dance music (as exemplified by the swing bands of the thirties and forties) to being a music for listening. Gillespie and Parker, the giants in the new style, were masters of its improvisational technique. They also shaped its "hard" sound and its complexity. This new sound changed and evolved, too, as cool jazz and funky jazz were born.

The most influential and famous of the new jazz musicians were the following.

**Charlie Parker** was an alto saxophonist who played with Dizzy Gillespie in a quintet at a club called Minton's in Harlem. With his improvisational genius, he influenced jazz musicians across the nation, regardless of the instruments they played. His work and the richness of his musical ideas set new standards in jazz.

**Dizzy Gillespie** was a trumpet player, composer, and band leader. His innovations helped revitalize jazz. He also pioneered Afro-Cuban jazz, which combines Latin rhythms with bebop improvisations. Gillespie has always had a gift for communicating with his public and has always encouraged new talent.

**Thelonious Monk** was a composer, pianist, and band leader. He was one of the most adventuresome and influential of jazz musicians. His unusual use of dissonance and his daring personal style made him controversial.

**Art Blakey** was a drummer who became a leader in funky jazz. He promoted the drums as a frontline instrument in jazz. Blakey, who said "every man searches for his own sounds, makes his own music, creates his own style," captured the essence of improvisational jazz. Blakey's funky jazz incorporated elements of African music.

**John Coltrane** was a tenor saxophonist of the Fifties era. He played in Dizzy Gillespie's big band and played with Miles Davis from 1955 to 1960.

**Ornette Coleman,** alto saxophonist, violinist, and trumpet player, was the center of a new style called free jazz.

**Miles Davis,** a trumpet player who in 1948 formed a nine-piece group that developed a new jazz sound, became famous for his cool jazz with its lagging beat and unique orchestration. His cool jazz made the first use of the French horn and tuba in jazz music. Davis went on to express jazz in the electronic sound of the 1960s. More recently, Davis has pioneered in fusion, a new form that combines rock music with jazz sounds.

Many Black musicians toured the South with their music. Others made Harlem a center for musical innovation. Harlem was a large, urban community for middle class Blacks in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, and it drew into itself the businesses, organizations, and culture that reflected the needs of its people.

One of the fortunate developments in Harlem was the growth of Black show business, fostered mostly in clubs such as the Apollo, the Savoy Ballroom, Connie's Inn, and the Cotton Club. Outside Harlem, Blacks performed in The Howard, The Royal, Chicago's Regal, and Philadelphia's Earle. The greatest of these clubs was the Apollo. The Apollo produced the greatest of Black musical tradition, and the Apollo was open to both Blacks and Whites.

The Cotton Club, while one of the excellent theatres in Harlem, was marred by its White-only policy. Blacks entertained and gained reputations at the Cotton Club, but for many years were not permitted in as customers. Whites came to the club for adventure and excitement, and for the superb talent it offered.

The clubs in Harlem provided a stage for Black performers and consequently were enormously influential on Black musical forms and on American music in general.

Although blues and jazz were the monolithic expressions of Black musicians in the twentieth century, many other American musical forms benefitted from Black contributions. Black composers and performers who have enriched and influenced the Fifties musical culture through the spiritual, opera, ballad, pop, and other forms include the following.

**Harry T. Burleigh** was a baritone singer who gained recognition at the turn of the century. He composed art songs, arranged spirituals, and influenced Black vocalists.

**Will Marion Cook** was a violinist who wrote scores for the Black musical when it was a newcomer on the musical scene in America. He also composed music for orchestras he himself formed and conducted.

**R. Nathaniel Dett** composed in many forms, including the oratorio and piano suite, often borrowing from the spiritual.

**John W. Work III** was a choral conductor who collected and arranged Black folk songs, as well as composed art songs and orchestral pieces.

**Hall Johnson** arranged spirituals, composed, and served as choral conductor on the New York stage.

**William L. Dawson** is known for his arrangements of spirituals, but gained his greatest fame for his *Negro Folk Symphony*, first performed in 1933 by the Philadelphia Symphony under Leopold Stokowski.

**William Grant Still** composed abundantly in every musical genre. His works are among the most performed of all Black composers'.

**Eva Jessye** arranged spirituals and other music and conducted operas such as *Four Saints in Three Acts* and *Porgy and Bess.*

**Marian Anderson,** a vastly talented vocalist, withstood the rebuffs of White-controlled music halls. In 1939, when the Daughters of the American Revolution refused to permit Anderson to sing in Constitution Hall, Eleanor Roosevelt resigned from the DAR in anger. Subsequently, Marian Anderson was invited to sing an outdoor Easter concert at Lincoln Memorial.

**Paul Robeson** was an internationally acclaimed actor and singer, appearing in opera, recitals, musicals, and film.

**Natalie Hinderas** became known as a concert pianist. One of her famous pupils is Leon Bates.

**William Warfield**, a vocalist, gained fame through his performance as Porgy with Leontyne Price in the 1953 revival of the opera.

**Leontyne Price**, an opera singer, joined the New York Metropolitan Opera in 1961. Over the following decades, she established herself as one of the greatest American operatic singers ever.

**Mahalia Jackson** was the best-known gospel singer in the world. She was a devout Christian and dedicated her talent to inspirational purposes. By the late 1940s, she had established her reputation in America and attracted large audiences. During the Fifties era, she made international tours and achieved fame worldwide. She associated herself with the civil rights movement in the belief that her singing eased racial tensions.

**Aretha Franklin** is a popular singer who began singing during the Fifties era in the gospel tradition. Today she is known as the Queen of Soul.

**Lena Horne** began her career singing and dancing in the Cotton Club in Harlem. Her long career has included successes in movies, in night clubs, and on stage.

**Nat King Cole**, although initially a jazz pianist, gained recognition as a night club singer. He became the leading romantic ballad singer of the 1950s.

**Harry Belafonte** brought Jamaican and other Caribbean folk songs to the American public. He was also successful in films, and devoted energy to encouraging young musical performers.

**Ray Charles** sang pop songs in a blues style. His popularity has held strong through the Fifties era into the present.

In all their forms and styles, America's great Black musicians have had an indelible impact on her musical traditions. Today, the talent and innovation of a new generation of Black musicians are shaping American music in new ways. Truly, Blacks' music has had a greater influence on America than any other element of Black culture.

## Activities

1. Any discussion of music must include the opportunity to listen and react to the music itself. Ask students to bring in examples of music from the 1940s and 1950s. Students can obtain recordings from the collections of parents and grandparents, from other friends, neighbors, or relatives, or from the library. As records are brought in, sort them according to the following common styles: jazz, blues, ragtime, and gospel. Make sure that at least one or two examples of each style are available. You may find some recordings that do not fit any of these categories. Make a separate stack of those recordings. Provide each student with four copies of Worksheet #1. Play a few minutes of each artist in a particular style. Identify each artist or group for the class and have students complete a copy of the worksheet for each style as they listen. After students listen to the four categories of music, have them listen to the uncategorized music and determine if it resembles any of the four styles they have listened to. If it does not fit into one of the major categories, what name would they give this music ?
2. Have students complete Worksheet #2. Then have them divide into groups of two or three. Each group should select one of the major figures listed on the worksheet for a biographical report. Groups should report on the dates of birth and death of the musician, the city in which he or she was best known, the style of music to which he or she contributed, the instrument played, any groups formed by the musician, and any other facts that would be of interest to the class. Groups should find and present recordings of the artists' work to the class.
3. Ask students to think of ways that Black musicians and music have influenced American culture and attitudes. Give students examples such as the use of the song "We Shall Overcome" during the civil rights marches of the 1960s, and the individual freedom and self-expression typified by jazz artists during the Fifties.

Worksheet #1

## African American Music of the 1940s and 1950s

Your teacher will play selections from music of the 1940s and 1950s and identify different styles as you listen. Use a separate sheet of paper to answer the following questions about each style. The four styles are jazz, ragtime, gospel, and blues.

1. Name of music style ______________________________

2. List the groups or artists who are examples of the style: ______________________________

3. What instruments do you recognize in each recording? ______________________________

4. What does the music make you want to do? (dance, sing, jump, shout, pray, sway, etc.) ______________________________

5. How would you describe this style—lyrical (like a song, melodious), dynamic (makes you want to get up and dance, or move around), driving (has a strong beat, makes you want to clap), or stirring (makes you want to cry or laugh)? Choose one of these words or any other word to describe how the music makes you feel. ______________________________

## Worksheet #2 Black Musicians of the Fifties

Write the name of the Black musician described on the blank following each sentence.

Bessie Smith
Marian Anderson
Billie Holiday
B. B. King
Louis Armstrong
Count Basie
William L. Dawson

Billy Eckstein
Charlie Parker
Dizzy Gillespie
Miles Davis
W. C. Handy
Paul Robeson

1. He was known as "The King of the Blues." ______________________
2. He was known as "The Father of the Blues." ______________________
3. She was known as "The Empress of the Blues." ______________________
4. Her autobiography was *Lady Sings the Blues.* ______________________
5. He was a trumpet player and vocalist as well as a jazz innovator.

   ______________________________________________

6. He was a pianist and band leader who helped create the swing band.

   ______________________________________________

7. He was the most popular Black male jazz vocalist of the 1930s.

   ______________________________________________

**Worksheet #2**
*continued*

8. These two artists pioneered bebop, that is, jazz to listen to.

____________________ (played saxophone)

____________________ (played trumpet)

9. His cool jazz made the first jazz use of French horn and tuba. Recently he has blended rock music with jazz. ____________________

10. He wrote the *Negro Folk Symphony.* ____________________

11. A talented vocalist, she was denied permission to sing in Constitution Hall because of her race. ____________________

12. An internationally acclaimed actor and singer, he was hounded by the FBI because of his membership in the Communist Party.

____________________

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# Literature

**Objectives**

- to become familiar with the lives and works of major Black American poets, fiction writers, and dramatists
- to form personal responses to the works of Black writers
- to analyze themes and images used in the works of Black writers, relating them to the Black experience when appropriate

**Terms**

Harlem

renaissance

genre

**Overview**

The first published poem by an African American appeared in 1760. In the years that followed, few literary works by Blacks were published in America. A large proportion of American Blacks were trapped in slavery, and most of these Blacks were denied all the resources necessary for literary expression: education, materials, and free time. Their artistic expression comes to us largely in their folk art and music. Other Blacks in America who produced literature found publishers were uninterested in their work.

By the 1920s, however, a middle class of Blacks in northern urban areas had begun to develop. Education for Blacks, though still difficult, was not unusual, and many educated Blacks felt motivated to express their experiences and the Black experience in general through writing. Black writers began to experiment with both traditional forms and forms of their own invention. The great Black poets Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen, and Langston Hughes appeared. Hughes deserves special attention, for he produced superb work in many genres, including poetry, drama, the novel, and the short story, and bridged the decades to a new renaissance of Black writing. Hughes was still producing sensitive and penetrating work in the 1960s.

During the 1920s, Harlem became a center for an emerging Black artistry and culture. There writers and thinkers came together to discuss their work and their visions. The Harlem Renaissance, as this period of Black creativity came to be called, catapulted the Black writer into public attention. The richness of the 1920s, however, was followed by a decline in Black writing during the Depression years, when the audience for Black culture was economically devastated. Black writing made a resurgence during the Fifties era. It is this period on which we wish to focus.

The era saw some of the most significant achievements by African American novelists. Some of their works are now recognized as modern classics. Richard Wright, who had published *Native Son* in 1940 and helped adapt it for the stage in 1941, published *Black Boy* in 1945.

Ralph Ellison became famous for his novel *The Invisible Man* (1952). In 1965 a *Book Week* poll selected Ellison' s work as the most distinguished single work published in America between 1945 and 1965. It now ranks among such works as *Moby Dick, Huckleberry Finn,* and *The Great Gatsby* as one of the masterpieces of American literature.

During the Fifties, James Baldwin published two novels, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953) and *Another Country* (1962), as well as works in other genres. Like Wright and Ellison, Baldwin explored the conflicts and complexities arising from the experience of being Black in America.

Other Black novelists also produced significant works. Among these writers were William Demby, Ernest Gaines, Kristin Hunter, William Melvin Kelly, Julian Mayfield, Herbert Simmons, and Margaret Walker. Following the lead of Richard Wright, who openly explored violence and repression, these authors examined American culture with a tough, uncommitted perspective.

Black poets also achieved highly. Gwendolyn Brooks rose to prominence during this period. She won the 1950 Pulitzer Prize for her second collection of poems, *Annie Allen*. Her poems often called attention to the plight of urban Blacks and were characterized by a biting wit. Other Black poets writing during the Fifties era included Langston Hughes, LeRoi Jones aka Imamu Amiri Baraka, Robert Hayden, Owen Dodson, and Melvin Tolson.

The most significant Black dramatist of the period was Lorraine Hansberry. Her *A Raisin in the Sun*, which appeared in 1959, ran for 530 performances and received the New York Drama Critics Circle Award. Hansberry's second play *The Sign in Stanley Brustein's Window* was running on Broadway when she died in 1965 at age 35.

Hansberry was followed by other excellent Black playwrights. Among their most acclaimed work is the following: Langston Hughes' *Tambourines to Glory* (1963); Adrienne Kennedy's *Funny House of a Negro* (1963); LeRoi Jones' *Dutchman* (1964); James Baldwin's *Blues for Mister Charley* (1964) and *Amen Corner* (1965).

The works included in this survey are generally of interest to older teens, perhaps sophomores to seniors. Some students, or their parents, may object to the language or content of some of the books listed here. For these students, younger students, or less advanced students, the works listed under Junior Books may be the most appropriate examples of Black literature.

## Activities

1. Distribute one copy of Worksheet #1 to each member of the class. The worksheet contains a list of major Black writers. Have students use encyclopedias or biographical reference works to provide the following information on the worksheet: the dates of birth and death for each writer, the names of one or more major works written by the writer, the city and state in which the writer lived and worked, any major events within the life of the writer that influenced his or her writing. Add any questions relevant to the class's interests and skill levels.

2. Divide your class into small groups, and, using the information obtained from Activity 1, have each group read a short story, poem, play, or novel by one of the writers listed. Ask each group to present a report to the class which answers the following questions:

   a. What was the plot and major theme of the work read by the group?

   b. Did the work reflect events within the writer's life or events within the larger society?

   c. If so, what were those events and how did the writer portray them in his or her work?

   d. What feelings did the work create in its readers?

3. Distribute Worksheet #2. This worksheet contains two poems by Langston Hughes. Allow students to read the poems in class. Encourage discussion by asking students about the feelings they had while reading the poems. What do these poems tell students about the Black experience in the Fifties? In what way do the poems predict the turmoil and struggle of the Sixties? What feelings might Langston Hughes have had that caused him to write these poems?

4. Allow older or advanced students to write critical reviews of novels or plays by Black authors. First, allow each student to choose a novel or play; encourage careful reading of the work. Next, provide students with examples of reviews from newspapers or magazines. Finally, challenge students to write their own reviews, carefully analyzing the unique characteristics and strengths of a work.

**Worksheet #1**

Below are listed some major Black poets, dramatists, and fiction writers. Use encyclopedias or biographical reference works to find and write down the following information for each: birth and death dates, names of major works, home city and state, major events which influenced his/her work, and other information asked for by your teacher. Use the back of this sheet if additional space is needed.

1. Langston Hughes ____________________

2. Lorraine Hansberry ____________________

3. Ralph Ellison ____________________

4. Claude McKay ____________________

5. Richard Wright ____________________

6. James Baldwin ____________________

7. Robert Hayden ____________________

**Worksheet**
*continued*

8. LeRoi Jones aka Imamu Amiri Baraka __________

9. Gwendolyn Brooks __________

10. Jean Toomer __________

11. Countee Cullen __________

12. Adrienne Kennedy __________

13. William Branch __________

14. Loften Mitchell __________

15. Louis Peterson __________

## Worksheet #2 Two Poems by Langston Hughes

### Minstrel Man[1]

Because my mouth
Is wide with laughter
And my throat
Is deep with song,
You do not think
I suffer after
I have held my pain
So long?

Because my mouth
Is wide with laughter,
You do not hear
My inner cry?
Because my feet
Are gay with dancing,
You do not know
I die?

### Dream Deferred[2]

What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up
Like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
Like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
Like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

---

[1] From *The Dream Keeper and Other Poems* by Langston Hughes. Copyright 1942 by Alfred A. Knopf Inc. and renewed 1960 by Langston Hughes. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

[2] From *The Panther and the Lash* by Langston Hughes. Copyright 1951 by Langston Hughes. Reprinted by permission of Alfred A. Knopf Inc.

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# Theatre

**Objectives**

to list major Black plays and playwrights and to understand how they fit into White-dominated theatre

to become familiar with the plots and themes of well-known Black plays

to understand the role played by Black theatre companies in nurturing Black talent

**Terms**

repertory company    New Deal    Uncle Tom-ism    polemical

**Overview**

Today's Broadway theatregoers know that August Wilson, a Black playwright from Pittsburgh, won the 1987 Pulitzer Prize and the Tony award for drama for his play *Fences*, a wrenching examination of the Black father-son relationship in a society that undercuts the Black male's self-esteem. Many people also recognize the name of Lorraine Hansberry, the young Black playwright who in 1959 won the New York Drama Critics Award for her play *A Raisin in the Sun.* Many others have heard or read about Paul Robeson, the now-legendary Black singer-actor who excelled in many fields.

Even those interested in theatre, however, may know little about the many talented Blacks who in their time went unrecognized for their contributions to American theatre. Some of these artists were denied deserved opportunities and acclaim because of their color.

As early as 1821, for example, the African Company, a repertory company of free Blacks, presented their plays in New York' s Greenwich Village. Often they were met with heckling or even physical abuse. Another Black actor, Ira Aldridge, went to Europe in the 1840s and remained for most of his life, mesmerizing audiences and achieving enormous popularity. Aldridge found success in Europe when he could not find it in America. In America in Aldridge' s time, the theatre was virtually closed to free Blacks' talent and creativity. More important, most of Aldridge' s race was still trapped in slavery.

After the Civil War, Blacks appeared in minstrel shows and, as a result, the genre of the minstrel show expanded and changed to showcase Black talents. By the turn of the century, the mostly-Black musical had been born. At the time in America, however, Black theatre failed to achieve success; it fared better elsewhere. In 1902, for example, *In Dahomey* opened on Broadway with a score by Will Marion Cook and a book by Paul Laurence Dunbar. It met with poor response, because of both prejudice and actual maneuvering by White Broadway. Subsequently, the show went to London where it played for seven months to enthusiastic audiences.

During the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s—a flowering of Black talent in a variety of the arts—many Black performers, composers, and writers gave audiences new and exciting theatre. During these years, Charles Gilpin appeared in O' Neill' s *The Emperor Jones.* For

his performance he was chosen by the Drama League as one of the ten persons of 1920 who had greatly advanced American theatre. By 1921, *Shuffle Along,* a musical performed and produced by Blacks, had appeared. Its brilliant book and score by Eubie Blake and its performances dominated by singer/dancer Florence Mills wowed audiences. It ran for two years. *Chocolate Dandies* of 1924 featured Josephine Baker and Charlie Davis. In London in 1925, Paul Robeson launched his international career with *The Emperor Jones.* He followed this success with *Othello* and *Show Boat*. Subsequently, he starred in more than ten films.

Blacks attained some success during the 1940s as well. Richard Wright' s novel *Native Son* was adapted for Broadway in 1941. Paul Robeson' s title role in *Othello* on Broadway in 1943 marked the first time a Black man had a leading role in a Shakespearean play in America.

Franklin Roosevelt' s New Deal funded Black theatre companies in cities across the nation. These companies nurtured Black performers and Black dramatists. The playwrights wanted to counter stereotyping with presentations of Blacks as real and full human beings. They produced plays like Frank Wilson' s *Walk Together, Chillun* and Hall Johnson' s *Run, Little Chillun.*

After the war was over, Blacks redoubled their efforts for sympathetic portrayal in the theatre. During World War II, as in World War I, Blacks had given of themselves and their lives to defend American democracy abroad. Again they returned to claim the rights they had fought to protect. It comes as no surprise that the first post-World War II play to generate controvery and sympathy for Blacks was *Jeb* (1946), starring Ossie Davis. The play depicted the racism confronting a Black soldier who returns from the war with newly acquired accounting skills, only to find no White employer will hire him in his Louisiana hometown.

In 1946, Blacks for the first time could purchase main floor tickets to Broadway plays. A number of theatrical productions featuring Black themes, such as *Porgy and Bess, Green Pastures,* and *Shuffle Along* were revived on Broadway with Blacks in starring roles. While Black actors enjoyed unprecedented opportunities to work in major productions, Black playwrights organized to promote their work.

In 1947, a group of Black playwrights formed the Council on the Negro in the Arts (CNA). The members of this Harlem-based organization were both politically active and artistically gifted. They included Langston Hughes, William Branch, Loften Mitchell, and Alice Childress. These writers were responsible for five of the seven most important and successful plays by and about Blacks in the Fifties era. The other two playwrights were Louis Peterson and Lorraine Hansberry. Peterson' s *Take a Giant Step* appeared in 1953 and was the most successful play by a Black until 1959. In that year, Lorraine Hansberry' s *Raisin in the Sun* stunned audiences and won the New York Drama Critics Award.

The CNA-affiliated plays are:

***A Medal for Willie*** by William Branch. This work analyzed the grief of a Black soldier' s family. The soldier had died a hero in World War II but had been denied a hero' s burial in his southern home town. The play opened in Harlem' s Club Baron in October, 1951, and ran until January, 1952.

***In Splendid Error*** by William Branch. It dramatized Frederick Douglass' vain attempt to dissuade radical John Brown from his doomed insurrection. It opened at Greenwich Mews on October 25, 1954, and ran through January, 1955.

***Troubie in Mind*** by Alice Childress. In this play within a play, Black members of an interracial cast confront Whites regarding the demeaning, stereotyped roles they have been hired to play. The Blacks also address the racial hypocrisy of White producers, directors, and actors. Childress' play opened at Greenwich Mews on November 4, 1955, and ran through February 5, 1956.

***Simply Heavenly*** by Langston Hughes. It included a series of vignettes on the romantic troubles of a Black "everyman" for the Fifties, Jesse B. Simple. It opened at Harlem's Playhouse in August, 1957, and ran through October, 1957.

***A Land Beyond the River*** by Loften Mitchell. This play was based on the true story of a Black South Carolina minister' s effort to bus his Black parishioners' children to the only school (a White school) in his county. The White community retaliated, and the minister had to flee with his family to New York City. The minister' s legal challenge to South Carolina' s segregated school system became part of the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court case of 1954. This play opened at the Greenwich Mews on March 28, 1957.

Louis Peterson' s largely autobiographical *Take a Giant Step* depicted a middle-class Black adolescent' s struggle to break the psychological conspiracy of relatives and White society that urged him to " lower his expectations." He beats the conspirators by arming himself with education. The theme echoes the faith in the power of education that kept both Black intellectuals and church leaders going in the Fifties era. Peterson' s play was the only one to enjoy successful on- and off-Broadway runs in 1953-54 and 1956-57.

Lorraine Hansberry stated that her message in *A Raisin in the Sun* was that it was impossible for society to accurately typify or stereotype Blacks. Her play presented a Black family caught in the pressures of White prejudice but responding as individuals. It opened in March, 1959, and ran for two years, totaling 530 performances.

By the early 1960s, Black playwrights had become angrier and, in a new development, directed much of this anger at other Blacks. A new school of writers, including James Baldwin, LeRoi Jones aka Imamu Amiri Baraka and Douglas Turner Ward, rejected those who depicted "Uncle Tom-ism" or Black accommodation, the submissive conditioning of certain religions, and Blacks' blind allegiance to White traditions. The cry of Black playwrights in the Fifties era was " Count me in." They wanted Blacks to participate in the best America had to offer.

As the Fifties era concluded, the cry became sullen and suspicious of integration as the promised land. The playwrights openly doubted that Whites would ever grant full participation to Blacks. The strident tone of the last years of this most polemical period in Black theatre is captured by James Baldwin' s *Blues for Mister Charlie* (1964) and LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka' s *The Dutchman* (1964), both of which advocate physical force over moral force as an agent of change. These dramatic statements precursed the riots of the middle and late 1960s.

On the other hand, during this same period, Ossie Davis enjoyed his greatest success in his work *Purlie Victorious*, which made audiences laugh at the prejudices of all America' s ethnic groups. Finally, the unquestioned giant of Black letters during this period, Langston Hughes, enjoyed his final major success with *Tambourines to Glory* (1963), a wisely humorous and at-peace-with-itself play. *Tambourines* administered its medicinal truths with a sweet humor, and became one of the finest elements of Hughes' legacy to all of us.

Black participation in American theatre became a reality in the Fifties era when, for the first time, Black drama gained attention and won awards. Furthermore, Black drama in this era was an expression of the Black experience in America. Theatre had begun to reflect the dreams and frustrations of Black Americans. The new success allowed Blacks to speak in a forum to which they had sought meaningful entry for many years.

## Activities

1. Obtain a copy of the play *Take a Giant Step* by Louis Peterson. Using the play's opening date (9-24-53) as a point of departure, research the critics' reviews of this play. (Newspapers and magazines published in 1953 include *New York Times, Evening World, Variety, The New Yorker* and others.) In light of the deeper understanding the criticism provides, assign parts to class members and read the play orally in class.

2. Have students write their own reviews of the play *Take a Giant Step*. Because they are reviewing the script rather than the play, students should focus on the quality of the writing, the honesty of the emotions and dialogue, the fullness of the characters, and the themes and messages of the play.

3. Carrying the themes of the play still further, you might ask students to reflect on their past experiences in classrooms. Ask students whether they have ever heard information that they considered wrong or misleading. If so, how did they respond? Have them compare and contrast their experiences with those of Spencer.

   Alternatively, have each student write a letter to Spencer or his teacher, either commending his or her actions or disapproving of the actions.

(If it is not possible to obtain the script for *Take a Giant Step*, activities 1 and 2 can be carried out with any other play from the Fifties that is mentioned in the overview.)

**Worksheet Activity**

On the line, write the name of the person described by the sentence.

1. He won the 1987 Pulitzer Prize for his play, *Fences*. ____________________
2. She won the 1959 Drama Critics Award for her play, *A Raisin in the Sun*. ____________________
3. He was a Black actor who in the 1840s went to Europe and achieved great acclaim and popularity. ____________________
4. This Black repertory company presented its plays in Greenwich Village in 1821. ____________________
5. In the 1940s, this novel by Richard Wright was adapted for Broadway. ____________________
6. Under this president, Black theatre companies were funded in cities across the nation. ____________________
7. This was the year in which Blacks could, for the first time, purchase main floor tickets to Broadway plays. ____________________
8. In this play Frederick Douglass attempts to persuade John Brown to give up his insurrection. ____________________
9. These were two of the writers who formed the Council on the Negro in the Arts (CNA) in 1947. ____________________ and ____________________
10. This 1963 play was the last written by Langston Hughes. ____________________

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# Film

## Objectives

to become familiar with films of the Fifties era that address racial and ethnic discrimination in America

to form personal responses to at least two of those films

to determine how Hollywood's version of the Black experience differed from real experiences of African Americans

## Terms

symbolism
anti-Semitism
stereotype
protagonist
multidimensional

## Overview

Operating outside the mainstream of the American film industry, Black actors and producers began making films early in this century. Black actors and concerns were not fully accepted in American film, however, for many years.

After World War II, a new tone, feeling, and content began to make themselves felt in film. Both *Crossfire* and *Gentlemen's Agreement* appeared in 1947, and both focused on a subject that had once been taboo: racial discrimination. Both films condemned anti-Semitism in America. Audiences responded favorably, encouraging the series of penetrating motion pictures that followed. These films treated the problem of racial prejudice.

In 1949, Stanley Kramer produced *Home of the Brave.* The original screenplay for the story had had an anti-Semitism theme, with a Jewish soldier as hero. Kramer substituted an African American protagonist and created a picture about discrimination against Blacks.

*Home of the Brave* used flashbacks to document the emotional breakdown of a young African American private, Peter Moss. As he undergoes examination by a sympathetic medical captain, Moss unravels his tale, revealing a number of racial incidents he endured while part of a special five-man mission to a Japanese-held island. Through the psychiatric session, the audience learns that the island experience is not the only cause of the soldier's disintegration. The racism Moss encountered has always forced the masses of the world "outside the human race."

Moss' story ends positively. He leaves the military hospital recovered and accepts a White soldier's offer of a partnership in a bar business. Free of the past, Moss says, "I am different . . . We all are. But underneath we're the same."

The film's optimistic ending may be too easy, lessening the impact of its message and leaving audiences far too comfortable about race relations. Nevertheless, it opened a door that had once been closed. Film audiences, it seemed, were ready to examine the social problem of discrimination, and they showed their approval by making the movie a solid financial success. Critics, even southern ones, liked the movie. *Time* magazine wrote, "It has novelty, emotional wallop, and excitement that comes from wrestling with a real problem, rather than fencing with a cooked-up plot. Even when it fumbles the statement of its message, the movie retains a sort of rough-and-ready strength."

Producer Stanley Kramer went on to other problem films in the 1950s and 1960s, including *The Defiant Ones* (1957), *Pressure Point* (1962), and *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1968).

*Lost Boundaries* (1949) had a less easy solution than *Home of the Brave*, ending with a troubled, confusing burden of guilt for Black characters. The film' s story was a true account of a New England African American family that had lived as Whites for twenty years. The film began by striking at the deep-rooted prejudice of the American small town. When Scott Carter, a handsome, light-skinned African American doctor, is unable to find employment at African American hospitals (where he looks too White) or White hospitals (where he is too Black), he moves to a New England community. There he and his family merely stop telling people what they are. In effect, they deny their color.

The film compromises its message by casting White actors in leading roles of suffering Blacks. Here it falls in line with a long list of productions which cast Whites in important African American roles to insure audience identification and box-office success. The conclusion is more compromise. The light-skinned Blacks who have concealed their identities end with the guilt of wronging the town. The message is unsatisfying, but again the film attempts to respond to racial discrimination in America.

*Pinky* was the first feature film to treat interracial romance. For her role in the movie, Ethel Waters won an Academy Award nomination as best supporting actress of 1949. The strength of her performance was also the strength of the movie: Blacks and Whites appeared as individuals, beyond the stereotyped roles society seemed to demand of them.

Tough minded and complex, *Intruder in the Dust* unearthed a somber piece of Americana: the injustice Blacks have faced in American courts and law enforcement. The film showed that a Black man had little chance for justice in America. It also showed, however, that some Whites were morally superior to others, creating a strong model figure in Lucas Beauchamp for White audiences.

Although many of the problem pictures at this point in the Fifties era seem in retrospect confused and wrong-headed, they signaled a coming age of stronger and clearer racial themes in American film. Film had become a legitimate vehicle for thoughtful statements about the Black experience. Hollywood's image of the Black had changed from the flat, subservient character to a fully dimensional figure of dignity. Films to come pursue realistic characterization and clearer symbolism with stronger and stronger conviction.

In *No Way Out* Sidney Poitier appears as a man who defines a source of racial threats and takes initiative against it. In *The Defiant Ones* Poitier's character is carefully developed against a backdrop of human values. In this film, a Black and a White are escaped convicts, shackled together. The shackles and the mutual goal of freedom affirm the two men's equality and their mutual dependency with extremely effective symbolism. Movies had come a long way since the *Tarzan* films defined Blacks as wild, ignorant, or subservient savages.

*Blackboard Jungle* (1950) concerns itself with delinquency in New York schools. In this movie, a White character establishes a standard of behavior for rebellious students. Poitier is portrayed as an arrogant loner who happens to be Black and whose insights and growth become catalysts for the film's resolution.

Understatement of racial problems for the sake of emphasis on moral dilemma itself is at work in the films of Martin Ritt. In films like *A Man is Ten Feet Tall, Paris Blues, The Great White Hope,* and *Sounder,* racial conflict is an undercurrent, while humanism is examined under pressure. In these films, Blacks consistently appear as multidimensional figures. *Member of the Wedding* presents Ethel Harris not as a subservient Mammy type, but as a maternal figure. *Take a Giant Step* falls into the same category, for it is not strictly a liberal protest film. It is centrally concerned with the problems of middle class adolescence. Its protagonist must come to terms with the fears and hopes of his family, friends, and society.

Harry Belafonte plays a lead role in *The World, the Flesh, and the Devil.* The movie scrutinizes a Black-White relationship and potential love affair. The moral responsibilities of human beings living in a racially configured society are examined. The questioning is the essence of 1950s' liberal humanism and makes the film an important one.

*Odds Against Tomorrow* is another Belafonte film. In it racial conflict destroys the commitment between gangsters intent upon robbery. The racial hostility reflects the confused morality of the characters.

Dynamic White-Black conflict was an evolving theme in the Fifties era. As the era progressed, Black characters became more fully human and themes became more complex. The evolution was not complete when the era ended. The late 1960s produced more movies with emphasis on Black-White relationships, symptomatic of social difficulties in America at the time.

## Activities

1. Lead students in a discussion about the images of Blacks seen in older movies like *Gone with the Wind, Miracle on Thirty-fourth Street*, or the *Tarzan* movies. Compare those with images of Blacks seen in Fifties era movies and television. Complete the examination by discussing current images of Blacks in film and television. Challenge students to refer to specific characters in specific movies and shows, clarifying their ideas and drawing careful conclusions.

2. Lead students in a discussion about the images of Blacks as portrayed by Fifties era Hollywood. Students will need a common point of reference to stimulate a class discussion. If your school has video playback equipment, borrow or rent at least two of the films mentioned in the overview for screening by the class as a whole. If access to tapes or equipment is difficult to obtain, it may be possible to find written scripts of the better-known films such as *The Defiant Ones* and *Member of the Wedding* in the local library. Lead students in a discussion of Black images by asking the following questions: What are the primary personality and character traits illustrated by Black characters in these films? Are Black characaters allowed to be multidimensional or are they simply shown as stereotypes of the time? If you have obtained films from different decades, compare the treatment of Blacks in each film. Challenge students to think of events of the time that may have contributed to changing attitudes toward Blacks (such as Supreme Court decisions, legislation, desegregation, etc.). Complete the examination by discussing current images of Blacks in film and on television. Ask students to refer to specific characters in specific movies and shows, clarifying their ideas and drawing careful conclusions about the images of Blacks today.

3. Ask students to analyze films they have seen recently. Ask students to identify ideas the writer and director may have been trying to get across. Ask students to explain the film' s message or central point. Encourage students to examine characterization, plot, choice of subject matter, and other elements to discover how the message was formed or suggested.

4. Remind students that films of the Fifties sometimes used White actors or actresses to portray Black characters. Ask students, as a class, to consider the following: What impact would this practice have on the careers of Black actors and actresses? What did this practice say about Hollywood' s belief about audiences? What feelings might a White actor or actress have about portraying a Black character? What feelings might Black audiences have about seeing White actors in a Black role? Ask volunteers from the class to roleplay a meeting during the Fifties between members of the Hollywood film community discussing a movie that is to be made about a Black family. The producer wants well-known White actors to play the roles of the family members because he believes they will lead more people to pay to see the movie. Ask two or three students to portray Black actors and actresses, and another group to portray White actors and actresses. Be sure that both White and Black audience representatives are included in the meeting. Remember that the producer pays for the movie to be made. As the rest of the class watch the meeting unfold, ask them to evaluate the arguments and the outcome of the discussion.

Film ______________________________________________

**Worksheet Activity**

Answer the questions below by filling in the blanks.

1. When did American films begin to explore the topic of racial and ethnic discrimination? ______________________________

2. What Black actress won an academy award nomination for her role in *Pinky*?
______________________________________________

3. What film portrays the story of White and Black convicts handcuffed together and struggling for freedom? ______________________________

4. Name two Black actors who first achieved fame in the Fifties.
______________________ and ______________________

5. Why were *Tarzan* films offensive to many Black viewers? ______________
______________________________________________
______________________________________________

6. What reasons were given by Hollywood filmmakers for using White actors to portray Black characters in films of the Fifties? ______________
______________________________________________
______________________________________________

Film

**Worksheet Activity**
*continued*

7. Pretend you have money to make one film about the Black experience in America. What time period would you choose and why?

8. What actors would you choose and why?

9. What message would you try to get across to audiences?

10. How would your movie end?

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# Glossary of Terms

| | |
|---|---|
| **ancestralism** | devotion to one's ancestors—those from whom one is descended. |
| **anti-Semitism** | discrimination or prejudice against Jews or Jewish culture. |
| **black power** | political and economic power gained by African Americans in their struggle for civil rights. |
| **blues** | a form of music developed by African Americans; mournful or melancholy songs. |
| **blue collar** | referring to workers and jobs associated with skilled and unskilled labor. |
| **boycott** | to refuse to use a product or service in order to bring about a desired change. |
| **chromosome** | a microscopic body that bears genetic information. |
| **circulation** | the number of homes and individuals who receive a particular periodical. |
| **civil disobedience** | a conscious refusal to comply with certain laws that are perceived as unjust. |
| **collage** | a work of art composed of objects such as newspaper or cloth pasted together on a flat surface. |
| **constitutional** | lawful; consistent with the United States Constitution. |
| **coverage** | in referring to the media, the manner in which a story is reported; the extent of the reporting and the amount of space or time allotted. |
| **defendant** | a person against whom a criminal or civil action is brought in court. |
| **desegregation** | the process of ending racial separation and overturning the laws that enforce unlawful separation. |
| **discrimination** | treatment of people based not on their merit, but on some external characteristic, such as skin color, race, or religious beliefs. |
| **eloquent** | expressive and convincing in speeches or in writing. |
| **entrepreneurial** | actions related to the setting up of a business or enterprise. |
| **erudite** | scholarly; refers to one who is learned. |
| **expressionism** | artistic movement in which the artist's inner experience and imagination are represented rather than the outer appearance of reality. |
| **genre** | types or categories of imaginative literature, such as poetry, drama, and fiction. |
| **gospel** | a type of African American music characterized by religious feeling and content. |
| **grandfather clause** | measures passed in seven southern states after the Civil War, providing that voters had either to meet certain requirements of property or to show that their forebears had voted before 1867. These laws effectively kept Blacks from voting in the South. |
| **Harlem** | a section of northern Manhattan with a large, predominantly Black population. |
| **Islam** | the religion of Moslems, founded by Muhammad. |
| **jazz** | a type of music developed by African Americans, characterized by an extemporaneous expression and syncopated rhythms. |
| **Jim Crow** | discriminatory laws aimed at keeping Blacks separate from Whites in public places. A similar system of laws in South Africa is called apartheid. |
| **life expectancy** | prediction of the probable length of life of a person based on factors such as age, sex, occupation, and risk factors. |
| **literacy test** | a test to determine if adults could read and write well enough to vote. Literacy tests were used in a discriminatory way to keep Blacks from voting. |
| **media** | a means or agency through which information is communicated; the press, including print and broadcast agencies. |

# Glossary of Terms

| | |
|---|---|
| **mortality** | the frequency of death or death rate in a specified population. |
| **multidimensional** | having more than one facet; having depth. |
| **New Deal** | the name given to Franklin Delano Roosevelt's plan for offsetting the consequences of the Depression in the United States. |
| **nonviolence** | a philosophical position put forth by thinkers such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi, referring to overcoming violence and injustice through conscious love and the disciplined peaceful reaction to violence. |
| **plaintiff** | one who brings action against another in a civil or criminal proceeding in a court of law; one who has a complaint. |
| **polemical** | referring to a dispute or a controversy; controversial. |
| **poll tax** | tax paid for the privilege of voting. In the South, poll taxes were used to keep Blacks from voting. |
| **protagonist** | a leading character in a drama. |
| **ragtime** | music developed in America at the turn of the century and characterized by a fast and syncopated rhythm. |
| **renaissance** | a new birth or resurrection, often used to describe a resurgence in the arts of a culture. |
| **repertory company** | a group of actors with a prepared collection of plays. |
| **secular** | civil; not under the control of a church; pertaining to worldly or nonspiritual things. |
| **separate but equal** | the doctrine endorsed by the Supreme Court in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which allowed public facilities to be segregated by race. In theory, facilities were to be of equal standards, but in practice this was rarely, if ever, the case. |
| **segregation** | the separation of people according to race. |
| **sit-in** | a form of nonviolent protest in which groups of people occupy a building or facility that is maintaining an unjust policy. |
| **skilled labor** | workers with specialized abilities or training. |
| **social consciousness** | a feeling of responsibility for groups larger than an individual or family; community responsibility. |
| **stereotype** | the unfair classification of an individual based on what groups he or she belongs to. |
| **symbolism** | a treatment of objects or events in which one thing stands for or represents something larger. |
| **tokenism** | a purely symbolic gesture; allowing a small change so that larger issues will be forgotten. |
| **Uncle Tom-ism** | description of the actions of an individual who is servile or obsequious; a derogatory term. |
| **unskilled labor** | manual laborers with no specialized training. |
| **white collar** | referring to workers and jobs associated with clerical, professional, and other nonmanual labor. |

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